

**'Could these hours have lasted...':
Representations of Live Performance
Described, Analysed, and Evaluated**

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Abstract

For centuries, the contrast between ‘live’ performance and its representation in scripts and scores, along with visual depictions and verbal descriptions (particularly the journalistic review), has been relatively straightforward. As Ben Jonson writes in his preface to *The Masque of Blackness*, he publishes the work because the splendour of the performance could not last. Although scripts, along with music scores and dance notation, often have an anterior function to performance, their ‘representational’ role is also significant. In order to exist beyond the moment of its creation live performance has always needed representing in some more enduring form. However, in the last hundred years a more complex relationship has developed between live performance and the representation, or even creation, of performance by various technological methods (film, audio-tape etc). The ability of technology to present ‘non live’ performances challenges the status of all representations of live performance; what languages (visual, verbal, or other) do justice to communicating the unique qualities of the ‘live’? This thesis addresses the issue of ‘liveness’, aiming to describe and analyse how the live is represented in various media (largely in the last two decades) and to evaluate components of good practice in representing liveness.

Chapter One investigates the relationship between live and non live performances, focussing attention on ‘live’ as a disputed term. This enquiry identifies a distinct perception of liveness, present in our cultural experience and represented in discourse. Chapter Two examines sociological and practical attempts to quantify this perception, and looks at how the experience of liveness is made manifest and meaningful through ‘audience talk’. To take this further, this enquiry applies discourse analysis to some original qualitative audience research. Chapter Three examines attempts to represent live performance in a range of media (photography, archiving, notation, video-recording), considering how a desire to counter the transience of liveness gives rise to a significant urgency to document performance. The thesis proposes that, across the spectrum of media considered in these chapters,

the methods and practices of representation constitute in their own right a positive cultural valuation of liveness.

The analysis of live-performance representations continues in Chapters Four and Five with an examination of journalistic reviews, considering relationships between definitions of liveness and the representation of the live in language. Both the status of the review in general and practical examples of reviewing are described, utilising the perception of liveness previously identified as a point of evaluation and ideas of phenomenology and linguistics as methods of analysis. Supplementing this enquiry are suggestions as to how language could better embody the spatial presence and temporal uniqueness of live performance. Since the thesis proposes that our ambition should be to encode the experience of liveness in its representations, it argues that in reviews the particular nature of live performance should be at the core of the written representation as it is at the core of the audience experience. The conclusion is a suggested 'poetics' for such a new writing of live performance.

‘Could these hours have lasted...’

preface to *The Masque of Blackness*

The honor and splendor of these spectacles was such in the performance as, could these hours have lasted, this of mine now had been a most unprofitable work. But, when it is the fate even of the greatest and most absolute births to need and borrow a life of posterity, little had been done to the study of magnificence in these if presently with the rage of the people, who, as a part of greatness are privileged by custom, to deface their carcasses, the spirits had also perished. In duty, therefore, to that Majesty who gave them their authority and grace, and, no less than the most royal of predecessors, deserves eminent celebration for these solemnities, I add this later hand to redeem them as well from ignorance as envy, two common evils, the one of censure, the other of oblivion.

Ben Jonson

(performed 1605; published 1608)

I hereby declare that, except for references to the sources cited, this thesis is entirely my own work and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree of qualification.

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‘Could these hours have lasted...’: Representations of Live Performance Described, Analysed, and Evaluated

Introduction

Before the advent of twentieth-century technologies, the vast majority of performance events – dance, music, and theatre – were given and experienced ‘live’. In the early twenty-first century, however, we can access artistic performance via a range of agencies beyond attendance at an event. Film, television, radio, audio-recording, and the internet are all alternative media through which performance is experienced. These diverse media all differently affect the experience of the performances they present, causing subsequent discussions of the performance to be made with conscious or unconscious reference to the significance and particularities of the presenting medium. This thesis asks whether we can also usefully consider ‘live’ to be a medium of performance. Is ‘live’ a particular method of presentation with its own significant and particular impact upon the experiencing audience, and if so what are the characteristics of any discourse attempting to represent live performance?

One of the concerns of the thesis is, therefore, consideration of what the particularities of ‘live’ are as a medium of performance: what effect does ‘liveness’ have on audiences? This issue of liveness, the idea that the live is indeed a particular medium of performance, is an area that previous studies (whose focus has largely been elsewhere) have only considered in a patchy and piecemeal fashion. Although some writers – including Bernard Beckerman, Herbert Blau, Patrice Pavis, and Peggy Phelan among others considered in this thesis – have made valuable contributions to discussions on the nature of performance, these considerations have approached the issue largely as a matter of asking ‘what is performance?’ (Any consideration of the *live* has been either assumed or neglected.) Such enquiries continue the tradition of philosophical – and more specifically ontological –

descriptions of the arts, and this thesis seeks to add to this debate as part of its wider considerations. In particular, I will focus my attention on explicit investigation into the significance of the live in relation to performance.

However, the enquiry ‘what is *live* performance?’ in my view demands accompanying questions asking what is live performance for whom, and what is live performance when. This thesis will address these questions by limiting its focus to the experience of performance for audiences in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This qualification recognises that, before one can attempt to describe the live as a medium of performance, it is necessary to consider how society constitutes it as a phenomenon. By ‘constitutes’ I mean the manner in which the cultural valuation and even definition of live performance does not merely exist externally but is in part established by society. How live performance is perceived and experienced is not unchanging; what live performance ‘is’ cannot be an enquiry into a timeless entity. Instead, it is a cultural phenomenon: ‘what’ live performance is in part the result of ‘how’ it is actively constituted by those that experience it. For this reason, this thesis examines the representation of the live in extra-performance media, activity, and discourses, thereby examining sites where live performance is discussed, analysed, documented, or otherwise ‘represented’. In this thesis I suggest that such representations establish a cultural identity of liveness, specific to a particular time and place, and hence constitute what live performance is to audiences to who experience it.

‘Representations’ of Live Performance

This thesis, therefore, addresses the question of how society constitutes live performance by examining its appearance in extra-performance existences that ‘represent’ it in one way or another. The discussion will include, among others, examination of academic debate, audience talk, archival discourse, still photography, market research reports, dance and music notation, and journalistic reviews. As methods of communication, these various media, discourses, and activities of

representation operate with established rules of exchange, or (in instances such as video recording) are in the process of conventionalising rules of exchange. As established systems of exchange and communication, they all represent live performance in social discourse and as such are all fields that constitute liveness as a phenomenon. In short, how live performance is represented defines and reflects cultural perceptions of what it is. I will examine how various representations perform this task and how they constitute the phenomenon of liveness.

‘Representation’ needs a little definition specific to this context. Live performance is re-presented in various media: the video recording of a stage play being one example, the review another. The continued, though modified, existence of live performance after the performance itself, its subsequent appearance in different media, is one aspect of the use of the word ‘represent’ in this thesis: literally the re-presentation of some trace or element of the absent live performance. Two additional comments are necessary. First, though there are obvious differences between, for example, the manifestly (although not absolute) mimetic nature of a performance photograph and the linguistic evocation of a performance in a journalistic review, these things have more in common than might at first appear. Certainly, I see both as similar enough to merit consideration as re-presentations of performance: both allow performance to exist (in a modified ‘representational’ form) beyond the moment of its creation; additionally, both are cultural fields that re-present performance for particular social purposes, and thereby constitute perceptions of performance.

My second point is that though most re-presentations occur after the live-performance event (logically enough) some have an anterior significance. Music notations, for example, typically exist before the performance. Alternatively, documentations (such as Labanotation) are constructed after a performance and are used subsequently as the basis for future reproductions. However, even in such instances where the re-presentation exists before the performance, or is used subsequently to recreate it, I argue that they remain representations of live performance. With the hyphen hence-forth removed, ‘representations of live

performance' here comprehends all the manners and means in which, even if anterior to the performance, a representation allows live performance to exist in a form aside from itself. They are 'representations' in that they are standing for, in various and complex methods, the absent live performance.

That the live performance itself is absent from its extra-performance representations imparts discussion of these issues with a particular urgency. Live performance requires representation in order to exist beyond the moment of its own creation, leaving it particularly vulnerable to inadequate or compromised acts of constitution through representation. Representations of live performance do not passively reflect the performance and are not neutral; hence, the question of how they go about constituting live performance is vital.

This thesis will therefore consider live performance through a combination of open discussion of what liveness is, and directed debate about how liveness is represented. The thesis combines these two elements because they are interdependent. The perception of liveness is certainly a result of the shaping and determining influences of representations. However, these representations do not originate the idea of live performance itself: there is an external phenomenon that exists beyond the constructions of its representations. There exists a certain play, or flexibility, between whether the representations of live performance entirely construct their subject or whether they in part reflect something essential about their subject. The division between reflection and construction is not always clear, inevitably perhaps, but it is mutually dependent. Hence, my suggestion here that representations constitute (or make manifest) rather than construct (and in doing so create) the phenomenon of live performance. This issue is discussed further in Chapter Two.

Limits of Enquiry

For the purposes of this study, the field and range of investigation is limited to 'high-art' live performances – of concert music, music theatre, spoken drama,

balletic and contemporary dance, and performance art – as presented in the UK in the 1990s and early 2000s. (In the body of this thesis I refer to this range of performances in shorthand as ‘dance’, ‘music’, and ‘theatre’.) This decision is made to provide some criteria for establishing limits, without which this investigation could extend, with some justification, to other literal live performances (stand-up comedy and pop concerts) and include more metaphorical live performances (sports events and public speaking). Even more particularly, I have selected almost all examples from performances at the Edinburgh International Festival as it provides a good, but manageable, breadth across different art forms. A further advantage is that the Festival possesses a self-defined commitment to presenting *live* performance events. The immediate, if provisional, answer to the question ‘what is live performance?’ is therefore provided by the practical fact of how live performance is constructed by one particular live arts festival.

The examination of live performance has been limited to the last two decades for similarly mixed reasons of expediency and theory. Changing technology means that the relationship between audiences and the media through which performance is experienced is also continually changing. Live performance itself may not change as a thing in the world, but as a cultural phenomenon its perception and constitution does: particularly relevant are changing perceptions of liveness in relation to ‘non-liveness’. My enquiry is limited to how society constitutes live performance today.

Brief comment is also required about how the following debate often divides into discussions largely focusing on one or another of the various art forms under consideration. It would clearly be impossible to consider all the forms of live performance – dance, music, and theatre – on each occasion and in every light. Additionally, as my concern is what these forms have in common as live performances, this would not always be desirable. Instead, different sections of this thesis discuss particular forms of live performance as required, with the decision as to which to employ when being sometimes inconsequential, but more often for reasons of balance and vibrancy of debate.

Thesis Structure

There are, I will argue, particular particularities of live performance, which cross-over all forms of live performance and are rooted in the experience of liveness. My intention is to describe these particularities in Chapter One, which follows an investigation into the relationship between live and non-live performances, revealing the difficulties of reaching a clear, positivist, definition of the 'live' itself. The questions raised by this discussion focus attention on the specific qualities of the *live* performance, rather than encouraging further discussion on the nature of performance as a whole. While there is an extremely large body of academic and social commentary on performance theory in general there is little on the significance of 'liveness', which is often simply assumed without any attention paid to its meaning. Exceptions to this are therefore notable, so I pay particular consideration to Philip Auslander's *Liveness*, published in 1999. Here Auslander provocatively redresses the neglect of the live as subject in its own right, but also reaches some conclusions that this thesis will argue are fundamentally incorrect. The second half of Chapter One therefore represents the attempt to describe the key experiential distinctions of the live as a medium of performance, distinctions that are described in terms of the promise of temporal and physical presence.

One of the clear conclusions of this discussion is that in scholarly exchange the status of live performance is a site of dispute: at the same time as the live cannot be easily defined in relation to the non-live, it is also clear that the live is perceived by some commentators as a place of resistance to the non-live. This resistance marks a cultural valuation of the live which is subtle and fluid, often instinctive, anecdotal, and subjective, and which rests in the discursive. The live is perceived and valued as live, and in part constructed by the discourses representing it as live; importantly this is not a matter of valuing the live over the non-live, but of valuing the live *as* live. Chapter One, therefore, explores the first of the discourses representing live performance that I will be considering: the explicit academic and social debate. Here

it is expressly clear that representing discourses shape ideas of what live performance is.

The thesis proceeds to consider how such discourses about live performance actively constitute the perception of liveness. Chapter Two first considers how 'talk' is used to construct the world around us, the primary tool here being the methods and theory of discourse analysis, before pursuing attempts to examine audience conversations as a further medium of live-performance representation. In the context of live performance, this is a field with very little source material, necessitating some original audience research. The chapter traces a series of links and correspondences between how audience-talk constitutes live performance and the attempts to formulate a description of liveness introduced by Chapter One.

To a certain extent, all live-performance discourses constitute their subject, certainly establishing the cultural conception and perceived valuation of their subject. However, the representing discourses do not wholly 'construct' their subject, and a crucial issue of this thesis, as a result, is the extent to which the relationship between discourse and live performance is reflective or creative. In Chapter Three I examine live performance as both a cause and an effect of its representations. Liveness is both a motivating factor and a created idea: formed in shape, value, and expression by its subsequent representations but forming, shaping, and valuing those representations in turn. The chapter examines a range of non-linguistic media or activity of live-performance representation, all of which are constituted in discourses about their practice as holding degrees of authority (archive, notation) or authenticity (still photography, video). The chapter questions such claims and considers both idealistic and pragmatic ideas of the relationship between these discourses and their subject.

Chapter Four looks at the journalistic review as an important form of written live-performance representation, questioning the ideal and practical relationships between the review and live performance. In an extended examination, I analyse reviews relating to just one performance, using them as a template to consider reviews in practice and theory. This exercise utilises descriptive and discourse

analysis, examining the language employed to represent the live performance in writing. Here I draw on the perceptions and valuations of live performance raised in previous chapters and join analysis with evaluation, assessing when and how reviews represent liveness most successfully. I suggest that the reviews that work most successfully do so because they write the live performance, encoding liveness in their very language and structure. This chapter draws on the work of the small number of writers who have directly addressed how language is employed to discuss live performance, particularly David Burrows and Thomas Clifton. However, in its detailed consideration of this area the thesis is breaking new ground. Also introduced are some specific ideas of linguistic theory, especially relating to phenomenology.

Chapter Five continues the examination of the review, this time taking the aspects of successful live-performance writing tentatively identified in the Chapter Four and considering them on a larger scale. The chapter considers 62 reviews of events from the 1999 Edinburgh International Festival, as well as examining the work of six well-respected reviewers (Michael Billington, Edwin Denby, Tim Page, Andrew Porter, Marcia B. Seigel, and Kenneth Tynan) from across the live performing arts over the last 60 years. I examine to what extent the best of live-performance reviewing has always 'written the live', thereby reflecting the cultural perceptions of live performance.

My investigation is, therefore, into the re-performance of liveness in its various representations, with many of my ideas as to the shape and nature of that liveness drawn from those representations. But I suggest that this background existence is not enough, for it allows all the other divergent and contradictory motivations and pragmatics of the discourses to dominate, creating what I see as the deficiency in live-performance communication. Given the complicated and diverse pragmatics of live-performance representations such as reviewing, and the cannibalistic self-constructiveness that I describe between subject and discourse, the idea of enquiring into the value, worth, or deficiency of representing discourses may seem odd. Surely a description of the relationship between the discourse and its subject, itself something of an original endeavour, is enough. Part of my motivation for this

project, however, stems from a personal sense of deficiency in many existing exchanges on live performance, arising from my own observations and experiences, from talking and writing about live performance myself, and from eavesdropping on the exchanges of others. I am often struck by how inadequate these discourses are, how unclear their purpose, how empty and compromised they seem in comparison to their supposed subject, and how any intimation of the live performance having been *live* is negligible. My intention is therefore to describe the relationship between these discourses and live performance, but also to make evaluative judgements upon their quality as representing discourses and indeed prescriptions as to possible constructive redirections. I have brought this element to the foreground, as the evaluative nature of this thesis is neither accidental nor apologetic. Indeed the programmatic aspect of this thesis is part of the point. In being so prominently evaluative I am also hoping to be provocative, highlighting the need to consider how all representations and discourses construct and transform their subject.

In my conclusion, I therefore return to this question of deficiency and formulate a 'manifesto' for a method of writing intended to enable the representation of the experience of liveness. This is grounded upon description of the particular nature of live performance, also drawing upon the ideological implications of the recognition of the liveness of live performance. The hope is to describe a method for the writing of live performance that constitutes, reflects, and in the end also embodies and celebrates the valued liveness of live performance.

Explicitly, as in the TAB campaign, or more implicitly elsewhere, live arts companies, festivals, and productions frequently attempt to attract audiences through the description of performances as live performances. The 1998 Edinburgh International Festival brochure, for example, invites audiences to enjoy ‘the excitement of experiencing live performance’; the 2000 programme extols the ‘joys of live performances’. Continuing this theme, the 2001 Festival marketing campaign included a series of newspaper and leaflet advertisements with a subtler reminder of liveness:



Alongside *Ricardo i Elena*, a modern opera in Latin, the 2001 Edinburgh International Festival presented events as diverse as András Schiff playing Bach piano concertos and the staging of a John Cage radio play, promoting them all as live performances. The differences between these events, or between orchestral concerts and contemporary dance performances, usually prohibit them from being considered or studied under the same category; but here, in a festival of live arts, they are united and defined by their similarities as live performances. Appendix One, ‘Marketing Liveness’, presents a brief review of Edinburgh International Festival marketing slogans between 1993 and 2001, a consistent theme amongst which is the promotion of liveness. Each year, therefore, the Festival presents events including live dance, live music, and live theatre, all of them in live performance; and it is the addition of the word ‘live’ to performance that is the central interest of this chapter.

Straightforwardly Live

What live performance is seems obvious; live performance as a concept is evidently accessible and meaningful enough for the Festival to explicitly highlight it in their advertising and to be the central aspect of TAB's generic promotional campaign. Indeed, knowledge of performances of dance, music, and theatre as live performances is often widespread and immediate enough to need no explicit mention at all. Advertising and academic study alike tend to assume that 'dance', 'music', or 'theatre' really means live dance, live music, or live theatre; consequently the issue as to what 'live' means is neither interrogated or considered problematic. Theodore Gracyk recognises this, suggesting in 'Listening to Music: Performances and Recordings' that most theorists 'simply ignore the issue' of non-live performances and proceed as if audiences always experience music in concert (Gracyk 1997:139).

An illustration of such assumptions, this time in relation to theatre, is present in Bernard Beckerman's *Dynamics of Drama*. Here Beckerman offers a succinct definition of theatre, but it is one that reflects the straightforward and largely instinctive knowledge of the 'live':

Theater, then, occurs when one or more human beings, isolated in time and/or space, present themselves to another or others. (Beckerman 1979:10)

Beckerman's definition of theatre is rooted in the idea that the audience and performer share the same physical space and temporal frame; equally fundamental is his understanding that theatre consists of the actions of people. More than half a century before, the importance of the co-presence of 'human beings' is also present in Adolphe Appia's declaration that theatre is 'regulated by the presence of the living body' (Appia 1960:42). These widely echoed perceptions are implicitly descriptions of theatre as live performance: for it is the co-existence of performers and audience that makes live performance live. Live performance, in these descriptions, consists of the actions of performers – actors, dancers, instrumentalists, and singers – experienced by the audience within a spatial and temporal co-presence. At a given

time, in a given space, live performance denotes a direct relationship existing between audience and performers.

This definition of live performance, resting upon the co-presence of audience and performers, seems secure and is of widespread usage and acceptance. It is also a self-contained definition: live performance being what live performance is; not contrasted with anything else or seen as a constructed phenomenon. Demonstrating such unreflective assumptions, playwright and director Ann Jellicoe offers an even more succinct definition of live theatre – ‘live actors on stage in front of a live audience’ (Jellicoe 1967:16) – that could be easily translated into a definition of live dance or live music. As a description of what ‘liveness’ is itself, however, this formulation is of limited usefulness in its unconstructive and unexplored dependence on the word ‘live’. Art critic and curator Chantal Pontbriand’s definition of performance presents similar frustrations:

Performance unfolds in a real time and a real place without any imaginary or transcendental space-time a priori [...] performance actualizes time and place. (Pontbriand 1982:155)

Again, this definition presents a clear assumption of performance as live performance, described once more as existing in time and space. On this occasion, unreflective use of the word ‘real’ limits the description to little more than the surface observation of the apparently commonplace.

Such assumed, implicit, and apparently straightforward descriptions of live performance seldom reveal much about the experience of liveness or acknowledge the ever increasing incidence of performances with different (non-live) modes of existence. Only when definitions cease to be so self-contained and begin to be more self-reflective do they begin to provide the greater consideration that this issue demands. Often the beginnings of more in-depth examination occur when it is recognised that dance, music, or theatre does not necessarily imply live dance, live music, or live theatre. Live performance is not the only form of performance, and

issues of liveness become more revealing when we consider the matter of what live performance is alongside discussion of what live performance is not.

Technology and Live Performance

To generalise with a fair degree of certainty, in the west today audiences experience most artistic performances through one technological medium or another, whether that is film, television and video, or audio recording. Philosophy professor Kathleen Higgins even argues that today 'it is only in the aberrant case that one experiences music in a live, group format' (Gracyk 1997:139). Similarly, if theatre is defined as narrative through speaking actors, as loosely 'drama', then contemporary audiences most frequently experience it in a non-live form. This situation suggests that today any perception and description of live performance must always be in contrast to the possibility, even likelihood, of 'non-live' performance. The hypothesis of non-live possibilities is present, unmentioned, in Beckerman's definition of theatre, in the Festival's advertising slogans, and in Pontbriand's description of performances in 'real time' and 'real place'. The relationship is even more direct in the TAB campaign, which makes the exhortation 'You'll Love It Live' with direct implication of the non-live – the entire campaign being founded around the ubiquity of non-live performances and the promotion of live performances as a superior alternative.

If cultural experience today dictates that live performance is always perceived in relation to the non-live, it is possible to argue that historically the very idea of live performance has been constructed by the concept of the non-live. Perhaps the existence of the qualifier 'live' predicates the significant existence of the non-live. Indeed, Philip Auslander suggests that the phrase 'live performance' is a usage dating back only as far as the 1930s and the development of relatively high quality recording and producing techniques in various media (Auslander 1999:52-53). Until sophisticated forms of technological reproduction existed there was no need for the word 'live' in relation to performance, as the 'liveness' of performance would be unquestioned. If the phrase 'live performance' is a twentieth-century response to the

presence of non-live forms of performance, then it is possible to argue that the concept of liveness has been a contemporaneous development.

The Chamber's *Dictionary of Etymology* (Barnhart 1988) confirms that the first noted use of the phrase 'live performance' dates to 1934; slightly earlier, in 1892, the word 'recording' gained its modern meaning of fixing sound on discs, cylinders etc. The etymological game, however, can be pushed further back in time: to 'record', with its roots in to 'recite' or to 'repeat', has been used to mean 'to set down in writing' since before 1200. The relationship between the recording of speech in writing and the recording of live performance on disc is certainly comparable. Whether between speech and writing, the world and figurative sculpture, or subjects and portraiture distinctions are made between life (or the live) and the representation of it fixed in some form of 'recording'. Technological developments require more subtle distinctions, because of perceptions of mechanical accuracy and neutrality, but the contrasts between life and photographs from life in the 1830s, between music and the player piano (or pianola) in the 1890s, or between theatre and video recordings in the 1990s, are not substantially different from earlier ideas of recordings. The term 'live performance', therefore, does not mark the establishment of new distinctions between originals and recordings, even in the case of performance. What is significant, however, is the addition of a particular dynamism to this relationship, which, since roughly the 1930s, has resulted in the creation of the phrase 'live performance'. The invention of the phrase does suggest a new way of looking at performance, and perhaps a different way of perceiving what before then would have been considered its inherent and unremarkable liveness.

For centuries, the indivisibility of human presence has been the basis for live performance in the arts: before technological presentations, audiences and performers were necessarily co-present in time and space. Art and music historian Richard Leppert points this out when describing how for centuries sound and sight have been united in the experience of music. Exceptions to this, such as Elizabethan theatre and pageantry, only hid musicians from view deliberately in order to create a powerfully experienced and 'socially abnormal rupture of sound from sight' (Leppert

1993:xx). This indivisibility of time and space allowed the untroubled contrast between live performance and non-mechanical methods of recording or retrieval (such as scores, notations, or scripts), mechanical methods of non-human performance (such as the player piano), or other manual representations (such as writing or painting). Significantly, the performer is absent, in time and space, from all these methods of representing performance.

Reflecting this comfortable ontology, Beckerman suggests that theatre occurs when human beings present themselves to other human beings, isolated in 'time and/or space'. However, since the late nineteenth century, and rapidly accelerating over the following hundred plus years, a more complex relationship has emerged as various mechanical and technological means of presenting (and even creating) performance have developed. In the face of such technological recordings, Beckerman's definition suddenly generates the inevitability of its own questioning, with the 'and/or' qualification suddenly very significant. Previously there was no question, except in deliberately 'abnormal circumstances', of performers being present to the audience in time *or* space, only and necessarily in time *and* space. Today the idea of performer and audience co-presence has exploded into questions of 'and', 'or', and 'neither' – such as wholly live performances, live broadcast performances, and pre-recorded performances. Such possibilities require a concerted questioning of assumptions as to what live performance is as live performance. The development of increasingly advanced methods of technological performance recording and creation raises the question of whether live and non-live performance can today be ideologically and/or practically distinguished. With the idea of live performance dependent on the idea of non-live performance, it is no longer possible for its definitions to be self-contained or unreflective. 'Live performers on stage in front of a live audience' remains an accurate description of live performance; the fact itself is not a construction. However, 'live performance' now also requires a fundamental exploration of all elements of its significance and contemporary perception. Such exploration need not suggest any hierarchical distinctions of worth between the live and non-live, but may point towards important differences in nature, experience, and cultural perception. Ultimately, one of the objectives of this thesis is the development of a language that

reflects and even protects and celebrates such particular characteristics of the live. Before that, however, exactly what such particular characteristics might be needs identifying.

Ontologically Live

It is worth introducing this matter through consideration of the ideas of two American writers of the last two decades. Working separately, Paul Thom and Linda Ferguson have both argued that there exist ontological distinctions between the live and non-live: distinctions grounded upon essential qualities concerning the creation and existence of live performance. Although I believe their ideas are ultimately unsustainable, they are provocative and express an unequivocal perspective that usefully sets-up this debate.

The instinctive description of performance as live performance that I have discussed is present again in Thom's *For an Audience: A Philosophy of the Performing Arts*, throughout which performance is always, if usually implicitly, live performance. But Thom also raises the questions posed by the existence of artistic performances that are not live, and in attempting to clarify the distinction between live and recorded performances offers the beginnings of a more reflective philosophy of liveness. Thom's intention is not to provide a historically contingent distinction between live and non-live based upon examples, experience, or expectations; instead, he seeks to describe an ontological theory of the essential nature of live performance.

For Thom these distinctions are clean and easy, requiring only his brief attention: he categorises live performances as 'true' performances, and declares that non-live performances are, ontologically, not performances. Consequently, the assumption that performance is live performance, or music is live music, is in his view unproblematic:

To call a recording of a performance a performance is like calling a picture of an animal an animal. It is a secondary usage, a trope, reached by eliding part of the original expression. (Thom 1993:5)

There is, however, a basic problem with Thom's arguments, as he appears continually to elide the technology with the performance that it is capable of presenting. Thom observes that a recording is a thing, which it is possible to hold, with the entire recording being present all at the same time. In contrast, a performance to him is a sequence of actions (not a thing), which is therefore impossible to 'hold', as it occurs over time and is at no one point entirely present. In a sense, Thom is correct: the technology itself cannot be a performance; but the real question is whether a recording can provide access to something that can accurately be called a performance. It is possible to 'hold the technology': the material object is present all at the same time; but this is entirely different from the material inscribed by and in the technology. It might be possible to insist on a difference between playing music on a recording and performing music live, but whether played technologically or performed in the flesh the music itself occurs over time and is impossible to 'hold'. (I will return to the more elusive matter of whether a recorded performance is also as a 'sequence of actions' in a moment.)

As here, Thom's discussion is useful in directly addressing the questions concerning the identity of live performance; while agreeing with his descriptions of issues, however, I often have difficulties with the conclusions he reaches. For example, he rightly points out the possibility of an indirect relationship existing between a recording and the performance that it is theoretically a recording of: as Thom observes, a recording may be indirect, reconstructed through editing and mixing; equally, a recording can be indeterminate, not showing and not containing all elements of the original event but only a selection. While the word 'recording' may imply a direct relationship between a copy and an original performance, this implication of fidelity can be far from the actual circumstances: no 'original' of a recording need exist, certainly no identical original. For Thom the possible complexities of the status of recordings, especially the inability of accessing the actual performance any recording is supposedly of, are central to the distinction

between live and non-live performances, rendering the non-live no performance at all. However, I believe these represent distinctions between live performances and non-live performances, not between performances and non-performances.

Thom's arguments also contain a series of implied value judgements: for him recordings are performances only in a 'secondary' usage of the word; further, he argues that the usage is a 'trope', as recordings are 'indeterminate', substitutes for performances, and not the thing itself. Moreover, the idea that recorded performances are not performances seems to edge close to arguing that recorded music is not music. If 'music' is music in performance, and recordings are not performances, then in theory (although Thom does not make this leap himself) recorded music is not music. Indeed, an article by the composer Linda Ferguson presents an example of such an extreme argument. Although she is keen to stress that they are not artistically less valid, Ferguson sees tape compositions (recordings that have no realisation prior to mechanical production) as not being music, and as ontologically different from music (Ferguson 1983:17). Ferguson argues that tape compositions are the manipulation and preservation of sounds: a 'product which sounds like music but is not performed' and hence in 'essence something other than our understanding of music.' Like Thom, Ferguson sees music as something produced by a sequence of actions: performed by the human musician. Again, it is possible to accept distinctions between tape compositions, as something 'played' without human agency, and live music, as something humanly 'performed'. However, as it is not necessarily possible to distinguish from a recording whether sounds are humanly performed or mechanically produced, it does not seem possible to class tape compositions separately from other recordings. Without such perceptual differentiation, which perhaps does exist in live performance, the manner of creation seems less significant. It is certainly not possible to classify, on this basis, all recorded music as non-music.

This discussion as to the relationship between the live and non-live is far from being solely of historical or academic interest, as is clear from the vibrancy of the debate in the music business and media in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The arguments are continued, for example, in a recent squabble over the music of

William Orbit, who in 2000 released an album on the WEA label titled *Pieces in a Modern Style*. This album consists of works by composers ranging from Satie and Cage to Vivaldi and Beethoven, rearranged for computer synthesiser. As its cover declares, this album is 'arranged, programmed and performed by William Orbit'. Significantly, Orbit cannot play any instrument apart from the computer, but equally no instrument apart from the computer can play his music. *Pieces in a Modern Style* reached number one in the 'Classical Album Charts', much to the horror of some who criticised it because it was inauthentic to the original compositions. Another problem, and one observed by the 'Classical Advisory Panel', was that the works 'were not suitable for live performance in a concert setting' (Clements 2000). In other words, they would be impossible to perform live: clearly, CAP's definition of classical music is music in live performance. The suggestion that recorded music is not music, partly argued by Ferguson and implied by Thom, is revealed as baseless by this pragmatic attempt to distinguish between music only feasible on computer and music potentially performable in live performance. The record-buying public clearly makes no such distinctions. In terms of being music, live music, recorded music, and computer music are all forms (ontologically and practically speaking) of music.

Thom's easy distinctions between recorded performances and live performances are far too easy and Ferguson's distinctions too extreme. The benefit of a comparison between live and non-live performances should be to focus attention on the under-explored concept of the live. Instead, these attempts to describe a difference between live performances and recorded performances reopens questions as to what *performance* is itself. The attempt to create a direct ontological description of live performance reveals the difficulties of reaching any easy definition of liveness.

'She Sang Live, but the Microphone Was Turned Off'

The extent of the problems that Thom ignores become clear when it is realised that it is not always possible to distinguish live and non-live performances on a practical

level, let alone on philosophical grounds. Even Beckerman's hesitancy between spatial and/or temporal presence begins to look too neat when confronted with the problems raised by Steve Wurtzler in 'She Sang Live, but the Microphone Was Turned Off' (Wurtzler 1992:87-109). In this article, Wurtzler presents a lucid and effective illustration of the practical difficulties of describing the relationship between the live and the technological. If ontological arguments fail to convince, Wurtzler reveals the existence of further difficulties.

Wurtzler describes four elements, or positions, of the spectator/event relationship: temporal simultaneity and temporal anteriority (i.e. the time relationship between spectator and event) and spatial co-presence and spatial absence (i.e. the space relationship between spectator and event). A straightforward definition of live performance would insist on it requiring complete spatial and temporal co-presence – the condition of the spectator being in the same space at the same time as the performer – and would assume that live performance could be defined as occasions when these conditions are met. This matches the definitions of live performance already considered. Similarly, the definitive denotation of recorded performance would be the reverse: with neither time nor space shared between performer and spectator. Wurtzler suggests that today the live and the recorded are defined in a supposedly mutually exclusive relationship to each other: live defined as the absence of the recorded and vice versa. This he sees has a spurious hierarchical binary opposition that, if accepted, posits the live as a privileged performance form entirely exclusive from recorded media – a statement which describes Thom's classification of recorded performances as 'secondary' to live original performances. And with only two possibilities – live or non-live – perception of this kind of direct and hierarchical opposition is clearly feasible. However, technology presents the possibilities of two further combinations: spatial absence with temporal simultaneity (such as a live TV or radio broadcast) or spatial co-presence and temporal anteriority (such as large screen action replays at sports venues). Wurtzler presents this clearly

in diagrammatic fashion:

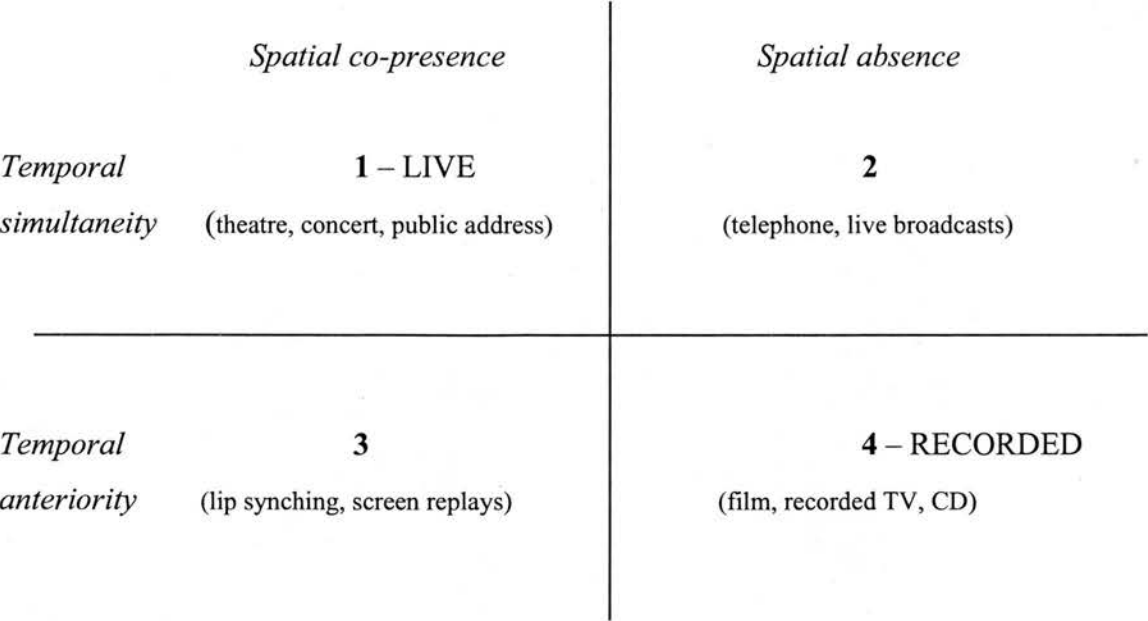


Diagram of spectator/event relationship (Wurtzler 1992:89)

As Wurtzler successfully demonstrates, the mutual exclusivity of live and recorded is today unsustainable. Positions two and three in the above diagram are examples of performance events that are neither fully live nor fully recorded, suggesting a problematic simultaneity of live and non-live. The situation is further confused as each of these four positions of the spectator/event relationship can exist for the same occasion, as Wurtzler points out in an illustrative tour de force that provides him with the title of his article. At the 1991 American Super Bowl, Whitney Houston performed the ‘Star Spangled Banner’ in the stadium before the start of the game. Scandal broke out when the media discovered that the audience in the arena had not actually heard Houston performing live, but a recording of her singing, made earlier in the week. The organisers’ response was that this was true: to ensure the highest possible quality experience for the public they had used a recording. However, they stressed that Houston had been singing live as well, but that the microphone had been turned off. The stadium audience had therefore seen Houston singing live, but not heard her live. The TV audience on the other hand, while not present in the stadium, had heard her live, as Houston’s ‘live’ microphone had been linked to the ‘live’ TV broadcast. Houston had therefore been singing live at the stadium (position one), but

the majority of the audience while in her presence had heard a recording of her voice (position three). Meanwhile the television audience heard her live but weren't at the venue (position two), and anyone who purchased or recorded a video of the match had an entirely recorded experience (position four). The multiple positions and possibilities here are bewildering, as Wurtzler delights in pointing out, although even he misses the trick of questioning whether the official video of the game included a record of the recording of Houston singing or a record of the live performance. In this instance, questions arise asking what was the live event, and what was a representation of the live event, which performance was a copy, and which was an original. Any possibilities of clear-cut boundaries between the live and recorded simply vanish.

It is also possible to discover other examples of similarly live and yet not so live performances. In 1981, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra had a crossover success with the recording 'Hooked on Classics'. Although it apparently is possible to perform this arrangement of classical pieces live, for technical reasons during a performance at the Rosebowl, California, the orchestra mimed to their own recording. The reverse, temporal simultaneity but spatial absence, was the result in 2001 when Damon Albarn's band Gorillaz, fronted by cartoon characters, did a series of 'live performances' on a tour of the United Kingdom. For these events, what appeared in front of the audience was not the performers but the projected images of cartoon figures; the musicians were performing live backstage with a direct feed through to the auditorium and the live audience.

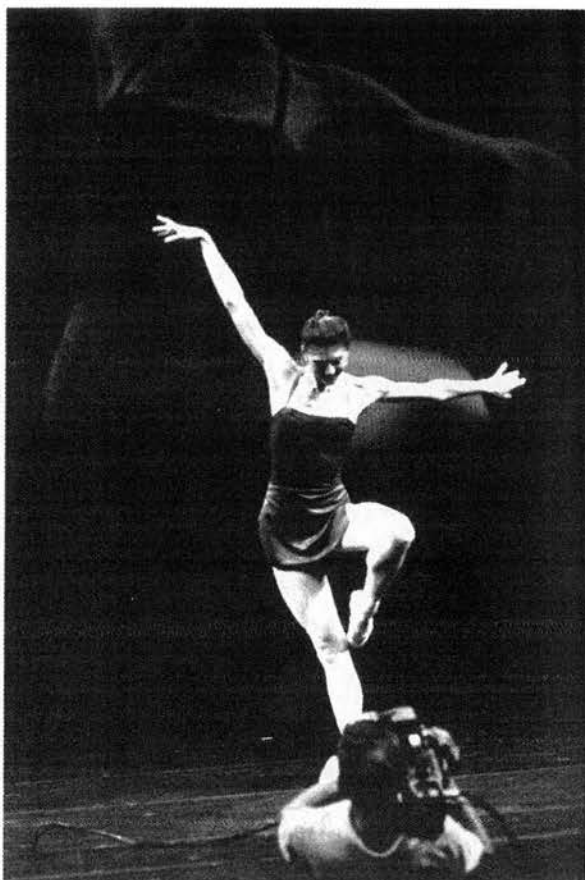
Many productions now seek deliberately to experiment with these different levels of liveness, one example being the appropriately named dance piece *Live*: choreographed by Hans van Manen, and performed by Dutch National Ballet at the 1998 Edinburgh International Festival. Performed by two dancers and a cameraman at the Festival Theatre in Edinburgh, *Live* included action on the stage, pre-recorded images projected onto a large screen, live images of the stage in a direct loop between camera and screen, and images of the dancers performing live in the theatre's foyer. At the end of the piece, the ballerina leaves the venue altogether, her

progress down Nicholson Street relayed to the auditorium by a camera on the roof of the theatre. The audience were able to contrast the different nature of experience that the different procedures provided: detail in the pre-recorded segments (close-up images, sharper focus, visible sweat and effort, the sound of feet and limbs smashing against the floor) and indistinctness in the images relayed by direct feed (low quality, grainy images without sound). On the other hand, the pre-recorded segments were in black and white, which, along with the lack of any information as to

location, alienated these figures as artificial and absent. In contrast, the direct feed images had an element of

the whimsical and familiar (dancing past the waiting interval drinks in the foyer, or the costumed ballerina walking past taxis on a rain-drenched Edinburgh street) that brought them closer to the audience. The action on stage, of course, was entirely live and entirely present.

More mundane examples of the cohabitation of the live and non-live occur with greater frequency, with concerts broadcast live or slightly delayed and broadcast 'as live', or live theatre or dance performances incorporating pre-recorded segments replayed over television screens. Indeed, it is possible that Wurtzler's categories could merge into a seamless progression of performances, no longer with any boundaries between different degrees of liveness, at least none important enough to be remarked upon. A 1990 *Canadian Theatre Review* article, discussing attempts to establish 'electronic tours' of theatre productions, indirectly presents just such a



Live, Dutch National Ballet
Edinburgh Festival Theatre, 29 & 30 Aug 1998

possibility. The article relates how a scheme, designed to enable increased access to the theatre, proposed that venues around Canada could host high-definition large-screen TV performances on a simultaneous feed from the live performance happening elsewhere in the country. A report on the possibilities of such a nation-wide programme, *Accent on Access*, predicted that, 'When the curtain rises for Ottawa audiences, it will be rising at the same moment in cultural centres across the country for the benefit of all Canadians' (Kirkley 1990:4). Aside from cross-continental time differences, it seems that at no point did the report raise any questions of important or even relevant distinctions existing between live and non-live performances.

One potential result of the emergence and cultural dominance of technological media is, therefore, not just the mixing of elements of the live, the not-quite-so-live, and the recorded, but also the possibility that on occasion the spectator will be unable to be certain about what is live and what is recorded. Or, alternatively, that any such distinctions are irrelevant. What Wurtzler's article highlights is that the supposedly neat binary distinction between live performances and non-live technological presentations is far from tidy after all. Today it is even possible to argue that live performance is never inherently necessary for the existence of artistic performance, a situation that leads Stan Godlovitch, in an article questioning the status of live music, to ask:

Is it merely a contingent fact that music is a performing art? [...] Is it just an accident of technology that for some centuries certain manually skilled specialists were needed to intervene, as it were, between music inventors and their audience? (Godlovitch 1992:1)

Contingently Live

At the other extreme from Thom's ontological perception of live performance as fundamentally different from the non-live, it is also worth exploring the possibility

Godlovitch introduces that any distinctions are entirely contingent. In *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, Philip Auslander argues that the status, perception, and even existence of live performance are indeed historically contingent and not essentially distinct from the recorded. Auslander questions the grounds on which distinctions between live and (to borrow his terminology) 'mediatized' performances are constructed, highlighting the implicit prejudices and unconsidered value judgements involved. Auslander expresses these arguments powerfully and, although he is sometimes over-reaching and grasps doubtful conclusions, his work is a useful tool in further focusing attention on the issue of what the liveness of live performance really signifies.

In *Liveness*, Auslander not only questions the validity of constructing ontological definitions of live performance, but also explicitly suggests that there is no possible ontological description at all. Similarly, he sees perceptions of live performance as culturally contingent and neither ontologically nor technologically given. Indeed, he describes the very attraction and cultural valuation of live performance as something created by mediatization (Auslander 1999:55). As evidence of this, Auslander examines rock music as an example of how social circumstances and mediatized culture have created a demand for specially constructed live performances even when the music originates in a recording studio. Elsewhere, Alan Durant makes a similar point in *Conditions of Music*, suggesting that with live performances of music 'What is represented on stage can become primarily a version of something that can be heard on disc and is for sale' (Durant 1984:111). This point usefully rebuts any suggestion that non-live performances are in any sense intrinsically less valuable, or secondary, to live performances; after all, if a live performance is based upon its existence in a recording then in what sense can it be perceived as secondary? More generally, Wurtzler argues that the demand for and valuation of live performance is something in part created by a culture in which the live has been encroached upon by the non-live:

Rather than the 'death of the aura' at the hands of mechanical or electronic reproducibility, the recorded reinstates 'aura' in commodity form accessible only within those events socially constructed as fully live. (Wurtzler 1992:89)

These arguments take their inspiration from Walter Benjamin's essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', which describes the 'aura' of an original work of art as diminishing through reproduction and representation (Benjamin 1970:211-244). Wurtzler, however, suggests that 'aura', cultural prestige, and cult value exist in events determined to be fully live because of, and not despite, the technological encroachment on the very concept of liveness. Steven Connor echoes these arguments in *Postmodernist Culture*, describing live performance as a socially produced object of desire (Connor 1989:151). The perceived value of the live and desirability of liveness in contemporary western culture is witnessed by the frequent use of the talismanic word 'live' in advertising and branding: live football, live in concert, recorded live, coming to you live from, in front of a live studio audience etc. Such usage constructs a number of equations, with different emphasis on different occasions, between the liveness of the event and its genuineness, its realness, vibrancy, urgency, uniqueness, and, ultimately, value. While the greater an event's claim to be fully live, the greater its ability to claim the attendant ideas of 'aura' and desirability, these claims are made even when the event is not absolutely live. This should not lead us to reject concepts of liveness altogether, but instead consider how they might be grounded in audience perceptions. In other words, it is possible to accept that the social valuation of the live is (in part) generated by the ubiquity of the mediatized, and acknowledge perceptions of 'live-like-ness' in non-live performances, yet perceive both as the valid results of actual audience experiences – that is liveness as experiential, and not merely ontological, theoretical, or culturally constructed.

However, in his attempt to close off this entire argument, Auslander not only rejects ontological definitions of live performance but also seeks to blur any practical and experiential distinctions of liveness. Taking popular music, theatre, and television as his principal territories, Auslander works through a lengthy series of investigations of

practical examples of the mutual entanglement of live and mediatized performances, systematically seeking to question, erode, and finally discard as irrelevant, insignificant, and unconvincing any residual differentiations between live and non-live performances. His examples include the now notorious case of Milli Vanilli (who not only lip-synched to their records during live performance, but who didn't sing in the original recordings either): here the impossibility of actually knowing what element of the performances was live and what recorded suggests that such distinctions are meaningless. Auslander also suggests that a frequently used synthesised version of clapping hands is now, apparently, perceived by audiences as more real than the real thing, suggesting that live performance does not have an intrinsic claim to superior reality. Another illustration suggests that the use of large screen replays at sports events and rock concerts presents the audience with higher quality viewing, and again a more real experience, than the live performer far away in the distance. Alternatively, other quasi-live performances, such as restaurant appearances of Ronald McDonald, are created from non-live originated templates that are replicated and multiplied endlessly and identically: here the live can neither claim to be unique in itself, nor original to non-live performances.

Liveness, due in no small part to its single-mindedness and commitment, is persuasive. Certainly, the central aim of Auslander's evangelical fervour to correct the wrong that he sees in the privileging of the live and neglect of the mediatized is significant; as already remarked, the idea of 'live performance' has escaped for too long without serious critical examination. Once recognised, occasions when the live and the non-live intermingle continue to proliferate: for instance, an additional example is the currently touring *Beauty and the Beast*, Disney's stage presentation of their film 'original'. Certainly a great deal of the motivation to see this live performance is created by the existence of the media version, with the stage production also being replicated simultaneously in venues across the world, all based upon and compared to the film template. This live Disney production is promoted with the slogan 'The Magic Comes Alive On Stage'. Is this an invitation to the temporal ('comes alive') and spatial ('on stage') 'magic' of live theatre, promoting liveness in the style of The Audience Business and the Edinburgh International

Festival? Or is it an invitation to something secondary, seeking to copy the magic of the original non-live performance?

Although neither Auslander nor any of the other commentators cited provide wide-ranging social research to back up their claims, these observations often have a ring of validity about them, especially when considering the contemporary experience of proliferating media. The arguments are also particularly intriguing if we see the very concept of live performance as something created as a result of the development of non-live media in the 1930s. Significantly, Benjamin's essay, with its seminal description of 'aura', also dates to the 1930s and clearly it could not have been written at any other time. It certainly seems correct that perceptions of live performance, rather than having an inherent value, are culturally constructed. However, to move from here to description of the existence of live performance itself as culturally constructed, as Auslander seems to attempt, is much more doubtful. Additionally, acknowledging the possible accuracy of the argument that the valuation and identity of live performance is in part inspired by the non-live is not the same as accepting that concepts such as 'aura' or the values of 'liveness' have no possible significance in and of themselves. Whether the live is valued and sought out as live because of the non-live is largely irrelevant to possible experiences of the live as live. Similarly, because audiences can experience technological forms with a degree of quasi-liveness does not render such experiences invalid. The rejection of essentialist definitions of live performance cannot equate to a satisfactory rejection of any definition of live performance, or, more particularly, invalidate descriptions of the experience of liveness.

Experience, not Ontology

Perhaps it is a mistake to attempt ontological distinctions in the first place. Martin Esslin, for example, sees no point in separating different forms of drama, and describes a straightforward relationship between the live and the technological based upon similarities:

Mechanically reproduced drama of the mass media, the cinema, television and radio, different though it may be in some of its techniques, is also fundamentally drama and obeys the same basic principles of the psychology of perception and understanding from which all techniques of dramatic communication derive. (Esslin 1976:12)

Similarly, it would be possible to make a case for music or dance being fundamentally music or dance no matter what form of production or reproduction it takes. To reject essentialist distinctions, however, should not be to reject all distinctions. While Esslin might be correct in describing the forms presented by different media as employing shared techniques, it remains that the medium of the presentation is different. This certainly does have significant effects, just as audiences experience the 'same' film very differently at the cinema and on television, so are experiences of live performance directed by the live medium. It seems unlikely that performances deliberately seeking to contrast live and non-live media, such as van Manen's *Live*, would have the impact that they do if it were not for the audience's perception of important distinctions between the live and non-live elements. Auslander himself partly recognises this, declaring towards the end of the first chapter of *Liveness* that

I am not suggesting that we cannot make phenomenological distinctions between the respective experiences of live and mediatized representations [...] What I am suggesting is that any distinctions need to derive from careful consideration of how the relationship between the live and the mediatized is articulated in particular cases, not from a set of assumptions that constructs the relation between live and mediatized representations *a priori* as a relation of essential opposition [...] The relation of live performance to mediatized forms needs to be understood historically and locally, in particular historical contexts. (Auslander 1999:54)

However, while strong in his attempts to describe changing cultural attitudes to different forms of performance, Auslander is ultimately not interested in exploring or speculating as to what experiential or 'phenomenological distinctions' might exist,

even in the particular historical context in which he is writing. In seeking to debunk the valuation of the live over the non-live, Auslander does not actually explore the phenomenological experience of the various forms of live, live-like, and non-live performance, the implication of this would seem to be that he sees any distinctions are minor, irrelevant, and accidental. Removing or disregarding the discussion as to social prestige or cachet, Auslander's conclusion that the valuation of the live experience is a media-created phenomenon does not suggest what the experience of liveness might be.

Auslander insists that the valuation and perception of the fully live is a construction, which is culturally and historically contingent. However, whatever deconstructions and complications are conducted upon the fully live, it remains that this irreducible state of liveness is possible. Live dance, music, and theatre are experienced through the medium of live performance; the top left square of Wurtzler's diagram – spatial co-presence and temporal simultaneity – is not itself a mediatized invention, nor a contingent phenomenon. It remains, therefore, that the medium of live performance directs the experience of liveness – perceptions of this medium may change (as occurs with any media) but liveness is always and continually vital to the experience of that which is live. Additionally, performances in other non-live forms can possess properties of live-like-ness, causing audiences to experience them in a way and to an extent determined by that degree of liveness. For example, the collective cinema audience is temporally present at a given time and in a given place in a very different way to any potential home-video audience. Such cinematic 'liveness' might be enhanced by an event's status as a premiere, or inclusion in a film festival, or downgraded by elements including sparse attendance, low quality print, or over-familiarity. Television, meanwhile, gains characteristics of live-like-ness from temporal simultaneity in live broadcast events, the urgent anticipation of premieres or breaking news stories, and the interaction between a collective and active home audience, though it easily loses these characteristics with repeats, pre-recordings, and passive or solitary viewing.

Non-live performances, therefore, clearly can be experienced with qualities that it is arguably useful to describe as 'live'. The significance of these qualities should be considered through an investigation of the importance of liveness, not through a rejection of the concept of liveness. That audiences might perceive technically non-(fully)-live performances with characteristics of live-like-ness does not render those characteristics negligible when experienced in either live or non-live performances. Consequently, it is possible to recognise that the fully live experience is not just an ideological and perhaps idealised position, but also a possibility, and one experienced at live performances everyday. Acceptance of the redundancy of easy ontological distinctions of live performance, and acceptance of a changing cultural contingency of all performances, does not rule out the possibility that there is, at this moment, a significant and distinct phenomenology of the experience of the live-performance event. Clearly, what is now required is to describe the important aspects of the experience of liveness in live performance, which will be examined first through consideration of direct discourses on this subject, and in subsequent chapters through analysis of how liveness is constituted in a range of extra-performance representations.

Part Two: Time and Space

The categorisation of the arts according to their existence in spatial and temporal dimensions has interested many critics. The existence of the performing arts in dimensions of time and space also emerged in the previous discussion as a central issue in attempts to either define, or debunk, any claims for the particularly live characteristics of live performance. The top left corner of Wurtzler's diagram, temporal simultaneity and spatial co-presence, occurrence in 'live' time and existence in 'live' space, recurs as a description of the state of 'idealised', or fully live, liveness. Although modern technology now severely challenges perceptions of spatial and temporal location, the categorisation of the live performance as existing in particularised time and space remains a description of the actual experience of live performance. Through focusing on the occurrence of live performance in these

dimensions, it is possible that an experiential description of liveness can be developed.

(a) Temporal Presence

Live performance takes place over a period of time; performance can be described as unfolding, happening, or occurring in its own temporal frame. The importance of this temporal aspect leads Paul Cohen, writing about Peter Brook, to describe theatre's 'unique atemporal character' (P. B. Cohen 1991:148). Similarly, choreographer Merce Cunningham writes that dance gives nothing back but a 'single fleeting moment' (Cunningham 1968). Clearly media of non-live performance, and other forms of non-performance art, also occur over time; the matter of interest here is whether there is something unique, something special, about the time of live performance.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that, from the point of view of the spectator, the experience of all art is over time; literature, for example, is often described as a temporal art form. While a novel may be manifested as a physical object, which is there regardless of time, to experience literature it must be read and reading occurs as a process in time. Stanley Fish's exploration of how the experience of the reader of literature is in response to a 'temporal flow', not the 'whole utterance', is one area where this has been highlighted (Fish 1980:27). In this aspect, this description of literature matches that of a recorded performance: both being physical objects the experience of whose 'contents' is a process occurring in time.

With the visual arts, the situation is a little more complex, as it is possible to argue that a viewer can see an entire painting instantaneously. This perception of an immediate experience of painting is one the art critic Michael Fried presents in 'Art and Objecthood', a manifesto advancing the pure presence of modern painting and condemning theatre. Fried negatively contrasts the occurrence of theatre over time, with the experience of modernist painting in a single moment: 'I want to claim',

writes Fried, 'that it is by virtue of their presentness and instantaneousness that modernist painting and sculpture defeat theater' (Fried 1998:167). Such ideological claims aside, it is unlikely that any visual art, even of modernist painting and perhaps especially of sculpture or architecture, is experienced only instantaneously. In an essay on 'Time in the Plastic Arts', French aesthete Étienne Souriau dismisses such a possibility as 'clearly false'. Souriau points out that any experience is altered and affected by the length of time that the spectator spends in contact with a work, with even a single or first experience having a significant temporal aspect (Souriau 1958:132). Art critic and historian Alexander Sturgis supports this argument when, in *Telling Time*, he explores how paintings are not taken in 'at a glance', but instead 'looking is a process that takes time' (Sturgis 2000:61).

It is probably accurate to argue that the spectator's experience of all art takes place over time. However, there remains something distinct about the relationship of time to the experience of performance, and even more particularly live performance. First, with the performing arts, both live and non-live, the work, as well as the spectator's experience of the work, takes place over time. Although both Souriau and Sturgis suggest that visual art can direct the spectator's gaze, they also recognise a 'profound and basic difference' in the more determined temporal characteristics of performance (Souriau 1958:124). In a range of manners, the visual arts allow spectators to intervene, rearrange, or otherwise determine their personal experience of what is an indeterminate temporal order. The length of time it takes to experience a Degas ballet dancer, for instance, is entirely determinable by the individual spectator; the length of time it takes to experience a ballet, is determined by the performance. (A novel, and most other written-to-be-read literature, sits halfway between these two points: the work directs readers to a sequentially determined experience, but they can decide whether to take a day or a year over the process and can read in a non-prescribed order.)

There are partial exceptions to this distinction, which include durational performances, such as Ross Birrell's 'Subject Matter', a slowly melting block of ice shown at the 1996 National Review of Live Arts in Glasgow. Andy Goldsworthy

also uses decay and chance in the creation of his environmental art, for example his 'Midsummer Snowballs' that melted on city streets to reveal objects concealed inside them (Goldsworthy 2001). These are only partial exceptions, however, as the temporal frame is not shared between the spectator and creator or artwork.

Importantly, many forms of recorded performance, such as CD or video, also allow their audience to intervene and determine their temporal occurrence through pause, fast-forwards, and playback. Recordings also occur in temporal anteriority with their artistic execution. These points represent the key particularities of the temporal frame of live performance; for with *live* performances the time over which the performance takes place, and over which the spectator experiences the work, is shared and determined. Non-live and non-performance media may unfold themselves in time but this time is not shared between execution and experience, which with live performance are simultaneous. Partial exceptions to this are again possible: the typical cinema or broadcast event provides a largely determined temporal order, although here execution is not co-existent with the experience. The live broadcast event even provides temporal, if spatially distant, simultaneity of creation. Live broadcasts, however, while potentially simultaneous, offer the possibility of indeterminacy through action replays, delayed feeds, and interactive elements such as the live pause.

These qualifications as to the uniqueness and importance of the temporal occurrence of live performance are subtle. Perhaps, however, the shared and determined temporal order of live performance describes something of the particularities of the experience of liveness, and as such is worth exploring in greater depth. The first area of enquiry is into possible descriptions of, and objections to, the concept of 'the performative now'.

The Performative Now

The playwright Thornton Wilder declared in 1962 that 'it is always "now" on the stage' (Cowley 1962:100). Musicologist David Burrows describes music as 'limited

to a now whose content changes ceaselessly' (Burrows 1997:529). Live-performance audience research records, along with similar comments, the remark 'someone is playing that instrument now' (Harris Research Centre 1993:30). This 'now' is a succinct and revealing, if somewhat enigmatic, maxim for the temporal existence of live performance.

The overriding implication of the now of live performance is its statement of presentness, something Beckerman reveals in a description of theatre as a temporal form:

Theater is nothing if not spontaneous. It occurs. It happens. The novel can be put away, taken up, reread. Not theater. It keeps slipping between one's fingers.
(Beckerman 1979:129)

Beckerman's use of 'spontaneous' here might appear an odd word choice, for it seems to imply the absence of pre-planning; in this description, however, it stands for theatre's quality of being of the moment, of being now. Echoing Beckerman on theatre, Susanne Langer provides a description of music in which "'now" turns into unalterable fact' (Langer 1953:139). This presentness of live performance is also detailed by Peggy Phelan, in *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* and especially in a chapter titled 'The Ontology of Performance: Representation without Reproduction'. Phelan locates her formulation of performance (although she does not mention the word) in qualities of the live. This level of engagement is displayed as Phelan writes that 'Performance's only life is in the present', and continues:

Performance cannot be saved, recorded, documented, or otherwise participate in the circulation of representations *of* representations: once it does so, it becomes something other than performance. To the degree that performance attempts to enter the economy of reproduction it betrays and lessens the promise of its own ontology. Performance's being [...] becomes itself through disappearance.
(Phelan 1993:146)

Performance here stands for live performance; the 'circulation of representations' could cover a range of possibilities Phelan perceives as secondary to, or parasitic on, that live performance. Secondary representations include, perhaps, merchandising, advertising, memorabilia, publicity, marketing, criticism, photography, and, inevitably, recordings. Like Thom, Phelan attempts to describe an unchanging essence of live performance: a description that, as ontological, takes its weight from essential characteristics and not from social or historical conditions. It is significant that Phelan, like Thom, uses the phrase 'representations', attempting to include with that all the ideological implications, already rejected earlier in this chapter as too simplistic, of the representation being secondary and inferior to an 'original' live-performance event. (Instead, as I will argue later in this thesis, I see representations of live performance as vital to the constitution, valuation, and perception of liveness.)

The most persuasive element of Phelan's work is her description of live performance as existing in the present, particularly her perception of performance as disappearing, with the implication that it is unique and unrepeatable. This reflects the imagery employed by Beckerman, where 'spontaneous' hints at no prior existence and 'slipping between one's fingers' at no subsequent afterlife. The idea that we cannot repeat a performance is an adage often heard across the performing arts, perhaps because, especially to those directly practising in live performance, it can appear self-evident. To those involved in the minutiae of a production, each night of a run of the same play or concert programme is different: differences caused by innumerable variations in the performance, small and large, conscious and unconscious, and differences caused by variations in the audience's responses and reactions. The 'unchanging' script or score aside, a particular live performance is immediately perceived as constructed from a combination of that particular performance and that particular audience, a combination that cannot be repeated.

It is possible to find formulations of this experience from practitioners and theorists

alike, such as Peter Brook, who writes:

[A performance] is an event for that moment in time, for that [audience] in that place – and it's gone. Gone without a trace. [... T]he only witnesses were the people present; the only record is what they retained, which is how it should be in theatre. (Melzer 1995a:148)

And Patrice Pavis, who also reinforces the concept that the desirability of live performance is something created in part by the age of mechanical reproducibility:

The only memory which one can preserve [of live performance] is that of the spectator's more or less distracted perception, or the more or less coherent and concentrated system of its reprises and allusions. The work, once performed, disappears forever. Paradoxically, it is during the age in which technical reproducibility is nearing perfection that one becomes aware of the non-reproducible and ephemeral nature of theatre, and the futility of trying to reproduce the score so as to repeat the performance. (Pavis 1992:67)

Declarations such as these maintain that there is no possibility of repeating a live performance, and, in addition, suggest that the only true record of a performance is the memory of the audience, itself a record that is necessarily disjointed and distracted. Performance, therefore, has no independent life after the event, and no undistorted existence beyond the period of its own creation. Echoing these ideas, performance theorist Josette Féral writes that 'With neither past nor future, performance *takes place*' (Féral 1982:177). Pavis similarly declares, in his *Dictionary of the Theatre*, that the performing arts are 'the only representational art that is "presented" to the spectator only once' (Pavis 1998:262). Such ideas of performative presentness owe much, including perhaps their seductiveness, to the work of Antonin Artaud, who presents in *Theatre and its Double* (interestingly another product of the 1930s) his manifesto for theatre as 'the only place in the world where a gesture, once made, can never be made the same way twice' (Artaud 1958:75).

To a certain extent, such arguments are legitimate, presenting a compelling depiction of the uniqueness of live performance. The idea that every performance of a production is different, however, is perhaps less a concrete description than a partially accepted convention. In practice, for example, the concept of the unrepeatable performance raises the issue of what is meant by the phrase 'repeat performances', referring to live events that clearly are repeats of previous live events. Also problematic is how sequences of performances, the production 'run', fit into this formulation. Clearly, at one level, subtle differences do distinguish one performance of the same production from another; there can be no two identical live performances, let alone more. However, these distinctions are usually, although not always, minor and not of such an extent to warrant a repeat performance being termed, and seen, as a distinct event in its own right. We tend not to number performances of a production or to differentiate them from each other, as occurs with World Cup finals or film sequels, which are manifestly different events of a much more significant order. Moreover, the labelling of the 'first night', or 'premiere', as distinct from subsequent performances marks the concept of 'firstness' as evidently important even in the context of the 'unrepeatable' live performance. (Complicating this issue, today previews often precede first nights, which are consequently no longer literally the first public performance of the production.) That long-running productions often celebrate milestones, such as the marking of the 20,000th performance of *The Mousetrap* on 16 December 2000, suggests that these are also, if less significantly, perceived as different events. However, that a 20,000th performance can exist at all suggests that live performance is almost limitlessly repeatable.

A Repeatable Present?

Josette Féral may, therefore, suggest that live performance has neither 'past nor future', but the subtleties of this description of the performative 'now' do not satisfy all critics. Clearly, on a practical and theoretical level the idea of the 'presentness' and 'unrepeatability' of live performance is shot through with paradoxes and

contradictions. In his rejection of formulations of any essential liveness of live performance, for example, Philip Auslander also rejects, among other ideas, the theory that live performance enacts an unrepeatable present. Illustrating his problems with this concept, he seizes on Phelan's description of the disappearance of performance for particular criticism.

Auslander approaches Phelan's claim that performance becomes itself through disappearance from two mirroring directions. First, he examines the processes of promotion, marketing, and the economies of production to argue that live performance is always already a reproduction or representation. To extend an earlier example: how can Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, based upon a film 'original' and performed in syndication simultaneously at a dozen theatres around the world, be said to disappear or be classed as unrepeatable? Second, he suggests that the live television broadcast, made up of thousands of instantly disappearing lines of information, and the vulnerability of video-tape, illustrate how mediatized performances are also subject to disappearance, rendering such criteria invalid as a unique description of liveness. Auslander also cites supportively an observation by cultural studies commentator Rick Altman that no matter whether a television programme is broadcast live or recorded, 'the television experience itself [...] is sensed as live by the home viewing audience' (Auslander 1999:12). There are, Auslander again provocatively asserts, no essential differences between live and non-live performance.

While this provocation is useful in elucidating further enquiry, Auslander's conclusions are again too unequivocally stated. Evidence for the experience of broadcast performances 'as live', for example, can only be provided through anecdote, and there must be an element of doubt about the claim's credibility. Altman and Auslander are clearly correct that there is no empirical sensual difference between live and recorded broadcasts, the dots on the screen are the same, and the medium itself contains no hint as to whether the message is pre-recorded. Equally, however, television provides no hint that it is not pre-recorded and it would be possible to see the default perception of the medium as one of non-liveness.

Additionally, to be of real significance, Altman's comment must describe more than just the mechanics of the broadcasts, and relate to audience perception; here the evidence is very slender, and no supportive research is provided. More persuasive, partly because it is more obvious and less ambitious, is Susan Sontag's suggestion that

With respect to any *single* experience, it hardly matters that a film is usually identical from one projection of it to another while theatre performances are highly mutable (Sontag 1966:31)

Agreeing with Sontag, a possible distinction between live and non-live performances would continue to exist with regard to subsequent experiences; in comparisons between live performances, even the performance run would have elements of mutability lacking from a recorded performance. This seems too minor, however, to be of significant interest, and would have apparently no impact on first experiences, resulting in a situation whereby only second encounters of live performances would be notable for any experience of a temporal liveness. Additionally, it would be possible to imagine arguments pointing out memory's mutability, and therefore the mutability of the individual experience of repeat showings of the same recorded performance.

Such a conclusion, however, ignores the potential importance of the *possibility* of repeating non-live performance in contrast to the impossibility of exactly repeating live performance. A film can be viewed once, apparently an evanescent performance that leaves little behind; or it can be viewed a number of times. Similarly a CD or video can be played once, a first time and single experience, or it can be replayed any number of times; equally television, especially with recent technological developments, always carries the possibility of repetition through repeats, official video releases, and home-recordings. The general growth and ubiquity of the media – including soon-to-arrive 'on demand' cable services for television, films, or music – mean that the media-presented event is perceived as repeatable because such repeatability is inherent in the material fact of the technology.

Clearly, such potential for repetition does not necessarily lead to the experience of actual repetitions. Making this point, screen and media professor Sean Cubitt argues with respect to television and video, that repetition is not 'an essence in the medium' but instead 'the possibility of repetition is only a possibility' (Auslander 1999:46). However, the potential repeatability of non-live and live performances is of a substantially different order. This is something that Linda Ferguson points out, arguing that although a recording can be listened to straight through, or 'as live', on the first hearing, it always remains the case that

No amount of deception or imagination [...] can change the fact that the dynamic process of performance has ended and ceased to be dynamic before the recording is played back (Ferguson 1983:23).

This description of the dynamic process of execution marks the first experience of a live performance as significantly different from the first experience of a non-live performance. Linda Dusman, another contemporary American composer, also expresses this idea; first describing how live performance represents a temporary community of composer, performer, and audience who together participate in the completion of the musical creation. Dusman continues, following Phelan's prescription of the disappearance of performance, to describe live music as an 'experience that can never be re-experienced'. She also writes of how a 'nonreproductive present occurs each time an audience member listens to a composition for the first time' (Dusman 1994:140). Significantly, and unlike Ferguson, Dusman describes live performance as fulfilling a non-reproducible present only for first occurrences: for premieres, and other rare, significant, or otherwise unusual performances. Indeed, Dusman radically suggests that even if a performance is an individual's first hearing of a piece of music, a work's cultural over-familiarity, its numerous recordings and reproductions, significantly affects the experience of the event even for that individual. The multiply-repeated performance, in a sense, is no longer a performance; the experience of the moment of live

performance being reserved for truly one-off events, where the audience can participate in the creation of the work:

The more familiar a work becomes, a familiarity often bred in repeated listening to recordings, the more difficult it becomes to experience its creation, and instead we experience reproduction *in* performance. It is at this juncture, I argue, that, beyond the circumstances of the physical environment in which the listening takes place, the experience of a work on recording and in performance is almost identical. If one accepts Phelan's definition of performance, contemporary audiences seldom experience a *performance* of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, but rather, a live reproduction of it. (Dusman 1994:140)

Dusman's argument here is lucid, and partly persuasive. Her description matches that of the fully live event, which to experience is to be there, and adds to it with a vision of live performance as 'firstness', as vibrancy, as uniqueness in the act of creation. (The word 'creation' in this context does have romantic connotations, particularly, in relation to performance, including the suggestion of being in the presence of the 'genius' artist or performer. However, although perhaps intangible, I believe that the word does describe some of the experiential qualities of live performance, especially risk and presence, which I will discuss further in a moment.) A comparison of performances at the Edinburgh International Festival can illustrate the vibrancy of 'firstness': while all the performances are fully live, perhaps some are more creatively live than others. On the 24 August 1999, for example, Ensemble Modern Orchestra made their UK debut, performing one European and one world premiere alongside Charles Ives' Symphony No 4. This was an event where the newness of the music required the audience to participate in a true occasion of creation. A week earlier the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra played Mahler's Symphony No 5, which, unless the orchestra added something particularly special to the performance, could be seen as an example of what Dusman terms live reproduction. (See Chapter Five for a detailed discussion of the reviews of these concerts.)

As in these examples, the creative urgency or anxiety of truly new or unusual performances does undoubtedly endow them with a powerful vibrancy and liveness. Live events of this description are, in a sense, particularly live – perhaps ideally live. However, Dusman is negative or neglectful about the possibility of live performance re-inscribing creative vitality into familiar performances, something that those involved in the Pittsburgh concert would hold out as their ambition and I would also suggest is possible. To follow a more positive outlook, it is possible to take Ferguson's description of the dynamic process of creation into a discussion of live performance risk, thereby marking the re-inscription of the live on each occasion of even a long-running performance.

Performative Risk

The dynamic process whereby a live performance is created in the temporal and spatial presence of the audience is one of creative co-presence, and is inherently loaded with elements of risk absent from the recorded performance. One of the unique attributes of the temporal existence of live performance is that the audience experiences the event as the performer executes it. A cinema audience watches a film in a determined temporal order, shared by the communal audience. However, the film itself, unfolding through time, is not created in *that* time. Short of technical breakdown, there is no risk.

One of the most revealing descriptions, and fervent criticisms, of live-performance risk is that made by Glenn Gould, who famously stopped performing live at the height of his concert career in 1964. Gould also articulated a philosophy of music in defence of the superior wisdom of his decision to produce only recordings, arguing that in the recording studio he could avoid all the pitfalls, dangers, and limitations of live performance. Additionally, he suggests that through the employment of editing and mixing the performer could create a recording as close as possible to the perfect performance, the theoretical perfect performance and the actual recorded performance both being impossible to bring about live. Live performance, in contrast, always contains an element of risk; for Gould this risk is not art but a

high-wire act – why pay to see if performers can pull it off live, when it is possible to purchase a recording of them playing as well as they possibly can? Why accept the second best, the imperfect offerings of live performance? In contrast, Gould describes the desire for live performances as purely voyeuristic: ‘I have always had grave misgivings about the motives of people who go to concerts, live theatre, whatever’ (Page 1984:453). Gould also implies, therefore, that just as recorded music should replace music in concert, so too are film and video absolute (and in his view ethically and artistically superior) replacements for dance or theatre.

The quality of risk inherent in live performance is often acknowledged by performance critics and theorists as existing, even as significant, but rejected as unaesthetic, ignoble, voyeuristic, and in the case of music as unmusical. Morris Grossman, for example, suggests live performance possesses ‘that peculiar and titillating risk factor that is absent when we listen to recordings’; yet his language already hints towards his dismissal of risk as at best ‘derivatively musical’ and something that true ‘aficionados’ discount (Grossman 1987:277). In this, Grossman matches Gould’s vision of performance reduced to a high wire-act, or Gracyk’s description of live music as the ‘aestheticized variant of the thrill of auto racing’ (Gracyk 1997:144). The risk of live performance marks out the ever-present possibility that something might go wrong and the valuation of the performance virtuosity that prevents that from happening. Art critic Francis Sparshott describes the sense of risk as a significant and more positive factor: ‘not that one waits for the artist to make mistakes or hopes for failure, but that the artist has laid his artistry on the line for one’ (Sparshott 1987:89). To this end, a revealing perspective on the issue of risk and creative presence is provided by pianist Alfred Brendel, who describes audience/performer co-presence as encouraging the ‘heightened intensity of the performance, in the increase in the player’s vision, courage, and absorption’ (Gracyk 1997:148). Here is the statement of a position that is the reverse of Gould’s: Brendel not only accepts the value of an immediate audience response to his work, of the audience’s presence, he also says that such presence improves his performance.



Gracyk dismisses Brendel's argument as at best descriptive of 'a rather hit and miss affair' – one that is dependent on the sensibilities of particular artists – and again declares that this has little to do with '*musical* experience'. However, it is fairly certain that the audience/performer co-presence encourages the 'heightened intensity of the performance' in the mind of audience as well as performer. The increase in the audience's perceptions matches the increase in the player's vision, courage, and absorption. This certainly seems to be the situation demonstrated in examinations of audience reception, such as performance theorist Elinor Fuchs' description of a 'circle of heightened awareness flowing from actor to spectator and back' (Fuchs 1985:163). Martyn Evans makes similar comments about live concerts in *Listening to Music*, where he stresses the effect of 'listening under circumstances of heightened tension in the highly charged atmosphere of the recital room' (Evans 1990:9). These ideas are also presented in sociological studies, including *Audiences: A Sociological Theory of Performance and Imagination*, by Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst, which similarly describes a 'heightened space' of live performance. Abercrombie and Longhurst also contrast the high attention rates of theatre performances to the low attention rates of television viewers (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998:40-43). These investigations, along with my own experiences of being in an audience, suggests that such heightened attention, more commonly described as the 'energy' of live performance, is far from insignificant in directing our experiences of the live performing arts. As Abercrombie and Longhurst write, 'the more intense the audience attention, the more involved it will be in the performance and the greater will be the intellectual and emotional impact (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998:43). (Gould would not necessarily disagree with this, he would just see it as negative and nothing to do with music. In contrast, I perceive such heightened attention as positive and everything to do with performance.)

The greater the sense of risk in performance – or, as Dusman observes, the greater the unfamiliarity or newness of the work – the greater the degree of audience awareness. Similarly, the 'less live', the less risky, or urgent a performance is perceived to be, the greater the degree of dissipation. Films, for example, are created

in the temporal absence of their audience: the dynamic process of creation is over by the time the film is experienced, although the co-presence of the audience, and the 'firstness' of the projection, might generate a heightened circle of awareness. Additionally, live broadcast events do convey some element of the vibrancy of creative presence in live performative risk. In other words, I do not believe from either experience or observation that the elements of temporal vibrancy that are associated with liveness are limited to live-performance events. However, although the level of attention invested in the live-performance event varies, and correspondingly the thrill and perceived unique liveness of the event also varies, I am convinced that factors inherent to live performance drive perception towards this heightened experience. In contrast, factors inherent to non-live performance can enact the opposite and diminishing effect.

Live Time

There is evidently a subtle conundrum here: live performance evidently 'repeats', whether previous performances or prior existences in the form of scripts, notations, or other media templates. A 'repeat performance' is exactly what it says it is: a repeated event referring both backwards and potentially forwards to other existences. Nonetheless, discourses on live performance continue to hold out the promise of presenting the now, with this promise paradoxically repeated each night of a repeated performance. I believe that this paradox can be resolved by seeing the performative 'now' as an illusion, a construction of presentness, which a long run, series, or tour seeks to reiterate artfully on each occasion.

Performance promises to be the present, promises to be unrepeatable presentation. This is what performance *promises*: it is what Artaud describes in his manifesto for a theatre of cruelty, what Phelan insists is required for performance to be performance, and what Ferguson demands for music to be music. Yet, this is a promise that is made even when it is recognised that live performance will not fulfil its promise literally. For audiences, however, the promise of presentness, and acceptance of that promise, is more important than absolute temporal uniqueness. For example,

Dusman's negative vision of 'live reproductions' meets its practical exemplar with the endlessly repeated commercial productions, such as Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. Here the promise of live performance to reiterate the now – and a sense of liveness – through creative presence and temporal simultaneity meets its greatest challenge. Yet, accompanying these live reproductions are the familiar stories of individuals attending performances on dozens and even hundreds of occasions. Frequently these audiences declare that the thrill of the performance is the sense of being there, in that space, at that time, as the performance is created. (Examples of such statements are presented in audience market research, discussed in detail in Chapter Two.)

Bernard Beckerman usefully describes such experiences in his discussion of the phenomenon of the performance run, where commercial theatre can even change the cast with little disruption to the continued reconstitution of the production. However, he also notes that

even when the essential shape of a scene is repeated, the manner in which it is filled by the spontaneous energies of the performer often produces a significantly distinctive experience. All the patient care of rehearsal and planning is for the purpose of presenting a spontaneous moment, a moment that is unique to that company and that audience at a particular time. (Beckerman 1979:161)

Here Beckerman's striking use of the word 'spontaneous', noted earlier, is provided with its complete context, and here Artaud's gestural theatre, never made the same way twice, also reaches its full statement of intent. It is the idea of the now that is reconstituted every night; and the sense of presence continues to deliver the results of a heightened temporal awareness in the live-performance space. In a willing contract between the audience and the performance this promise of presence is not a delusion, but is an event that creates faith; it is a promise that also carries with it its own reward.

Analogously, Walter Benjamin argues that *manual* reproduction enhances the idea of authenticity, suggesting that the labour of reproducing a work by hand, the level of personal attention paid by the artist to the work, maintains the unique quality of both the original and the copy (Benjamin 1970:214). If the reproduction of live performance is possible, as in repeat performances, then it is certainly, as director and academic Jonathan Miller suggests in *Subsequent Performances*, a process of manual reproduction (Miller 1986:67). The actor Sian Phillips neatly elucidates the complexities of the performative now in her autobiography, where she writes of how she loves being in a production run and steering a performance through the different circumstances that occur each night. As Phillips writes, 'Each night is different and not different' (Phillips 2001:197).

(b) Spatial Presence

The aspects of presence that I have examined so far relate mainly to the existence of the performing arts in time. Much of the discussion, however, has also implied aspects of spatial presence, and in particular the necessary physical presence of the performers. That is to say, live performance occurs in the 'here' as well as the 'now'. A live radio broadcast provides temporal simultaneity, potentially conveying the urgency of the performative now and a sense of risk, but the simultaneity of the here is ruptured. If the temporal co-presence of artist and audience represents the creative urgency of live performance (recognising all the associations of the word 'creative'), then the addition of spatial co-presence multiplies and augments these effects. The basic fact of the performer's physical presence is in itself significant and often seen as such, yet exactly how and why it is significant is more elusive. On this point, Walter Benjamin's comparison of film and theatre is a useful place to start.

Film, Benjamin argues, provided the first occasion on which 'man has to operate with his whole living person, yet forgoing its aura. For aura is tied to his presence; there can be no replica of it' (Benjamin 1970:222-223). Benjamin goes on to

describe how it is possible to see elements of this in the different experience of theatre and film: stage actors presenting their performance to the public in person, screen actors being presented by the camera. Benjamin describes this manner of presentation as the actor's presence, which he links to the body, making the distinction between the presence of the physical body and the presence of the image of the body. The question is whether the film image of the actor is a complete presence: does the film present the whole presence of the performer? In arguing that it does not, Benjamin employs a persuasively expressed, if today rather technologically dated, description by the playwright Luigi Pirandello of the difference between the presence of film and stage actors:

The film actor feels as if in exile – exiled not only from the stage but also from himself. With a vague sense of discomfort he feels inexplicable emptiness: his body loses its corporeality, it evaporates, it is deprived of reality, life, voice, and the noises caused by his moving about, in order to be changed into a mute image, flickering an instant on the screen, then vanishing into silence. (Benjamin 1970:223)

This description is evocative, but it is also clearly rooted in the era of black and white silent movies. What has not changed, however, is the indirect relationship between action and audience. Indeed, colour and sound have perhaps increased the screen actor's disjointed experience of performing. Film is always pre-recorded, the work presented to the audience as a complete product: such pre-recording temporally divides creation from reception, with all elements of performative risk and creative dynamism excluded. Additionally, there is a huge contrast between the production process of cinema and the product (particularly in what is termed 'classical realist cinema'): while the product holds continuity as the objective, the process is a model of discontinuity.

However, although nowhere more than in Hollywood cinema are the lengths that artists have gone so as to obtain reality more artificial, perhaps it hardly matters what the process is; instead, what counts are the effects. It does not matter if sound and

image are recorded separately or scenes filmed out of order and then merged in the editing room if the audience perceives them as continuous. Cinema no longer matches Pirandello's description of silent and ghostly images of actors on the screen; the film image of performers can now be tied down to the sounds of their footsteps on the ground, or the sound of their breath, and it does not matter if this is done artificially. Indeed, it is possible to follow this objection further and suggest that audiences do react to the screen image in a manner that suggests a faith in its presence. This is witnessed in stories of early cinema audiences screaming and panicking as a train steamed towards them, or modern audiences that are still prone to flinch at the sound of breaking bones or to duck if an object is thrown towards the camera. Technological advances again present problems to any distinctions between live and non-live performances. Hypothetically, it is even possible to consider truly three-dimensional, holographic recordings. Yet whatever the advances in technology the question remains the same. If we experience presence, in Benjamin's phrase, through 'the whole living person' then, to present the physical presence of the performer, recorded performances would have to present the whole person. The difficulty is in determining what a whole living person actually is, and what the significance of his or her presence really entails.

It is indisputable that the experience of people by people is significant; something perceived as human, or humanly created, is responded to in a significantly different manner than something not human. In the performing arts, this is the case not just in dance and theatre, where the importance of the body of the performer is well accepted, but also in music. Alan Durant, for example, suggests that the convention of speaking of 'listening' to music has masked the importance of the visual experience of musical production. He also suggests that the emergence of recording technologies in the twentieth century has encouraged the categorisation of music as purely audio (Durant 1984:89). Music, Richard Leppert similarly declares in *The Sight of Sound*, is 'embodied in practice' just like dance and theatre (Leppert 1993:xxi). As previously discussed, music in live performance is rooted as something done by the human body. As Ervin Laszlo puts it:

musicians express themselves as human beings and not as disembodied will, fingers and vocal chords. Their bodily reactions are part of their self-expression. Witnessing them perform complements and enhances the hearing of the sound they produce. (Laszlo 1967:271)

This description is one of a synaesthetic unity existing between visual and audio elements in performance and matches Leppert's exploration of representations of musical performances in visual art. Leppert suggests that historically 'sound *is* the sight, and sight *is* the sound', stressing that 'The body produces music, often from the depths of its interiority [...] Whatever else music is "about," it is *inevitably* about the body.' (Leppert 1993:xx). As substantiation of his statements, Laszlo also turns to the visual arts, and caricatures of Franz Liszt, in which he asserts it is possible to see the sound of the music in the movements depicted. Intriguingly, Alfred Brendel also refers to Liszt in a discussion on physical presence, suggesting that one of the composer's crescendos can only be conveyed to the audience 'bodily, with a gesture' (Brendel 1982:147).

These descriptions create a valid distinction between live performance and conventional audio recordings, or non-visual broadcasts, of music. However, as Gracyk also points out, the lack of visual data can be surmounted 'through available visual substitutes' (Gracyk 1997:140). Laszlo, writing in 1967 and responding to the existence of high-fidelity audio recordings, does not consider the question of video recordings of performances at all. Similarly, Leppert's assertion that 'when people hear a musical performance, they see it as an embodied activity' (Leppert 1993:xxii) may fit his examination of the period 1600-1900, but surely needs examination in the light of twentieth-century technologies. However, none of this is specific to the synaesthetic audio-visual experience of live performance – unless, that is, the body is experienced as more than merely visual. (Laszlo does write of how musicians 'convey feelings with their living presence' (Laszlo 1967:272) but unfortunately does not expand on this.)

Is 'living presence' – the 'whole living person' – different from the projected presence of the screen image? If so, then the distinctions exist in the spatial and temporal relationships between the living presence of the performer and the audience. An interesting contribution to this debate comes from Beckerman, who suggests that the medium of film is celluloid and the medium of theatre man. 'Eliminate the actuality of man and eliminate theater', writes Beckerman; 'the experience of seeing human beings battling time and space cannot be the same as seeing visual images upon a screen' (Beckerman 1979:7). Although Beckerman does not detail why it cannot be the same, the suggestion is that the experience of presence for the audience of live performance is different, in terms of effect, from the audience's experience of technological presentations.

Now all this remains questionable and unspecific. The observations of Beckerman are rooted largely in suggestion and metaphor, as are the similar comments of performance theorist Herbert Blau, who describes the performer as entirely there, really 'dying' in front of us. However, looking at the debate with a sideways glance, Groucho Marx presents a more concrete illustration of live presence in a letter to a friend that describes the different levels of reality and performer presence:

I saw *I Am a Camera* last night, the John Van Druten play, and we sat in the first row. And Julie Harris (she plays I guess they call it 'the lead' in the theatre), you could see the scratches on her legs. At first we thought this had something to do with the play and we waited for these scratches to come to life. But Arthur, it was never mentioned in the play and we finally came to the conclusion that either she had been shaving too close or she'd been kicked around in the dressing room by her boy friend. Now honestly, could anything like this happen in the movies?

Think of it – here you see a girl's real scratches! It was great fun. (Burns 1972:36)

Interestingly Elizabeth Burns, in *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in Theatre and Social Life*, interprets the significance of Marx's observation as highlighting how the detection of incidental elements, of reality, in theatrical action 'deflates and therefore devalues dramatic performance' (Burns 1972:36). This seems unlikely, and instead I

see the comments as an example of the experience of the whole bodily presence of the live performer – there in the flesh. For there are always ‘incidental elements of reality’ in live performance: including the frame of the stage, the presence of the audience, and the simultaneous existence of both the character and the actor. Additionally, the continuity between ‘real’ space and ‘performance’ space with live performance causes these incidental elements to carry much greater significance than any that might exist in the discontinuous space of non-live performances – the division between off-screen and on-screen is absolute, between off- and on-stage it is continually shifting and uncertain. The live performer presents his or her performance in person, and Marx’s observation highlights this along with the double promise of live performance: the movement between belief and disbelief, between seeing the performer and seeing the performance. This marks down the live performance, to a much greater extent than the non-live performance, as something done by people. For live performers are always present as people at the same time as they are presenting themselves as ‘actor’, ‘dancer’, ‘musician’, or ‘singer’. Indeed, because of temporal simultaneity, live performance is marked as something being done *by* people, *for* people.

Co-presence

‘Physical presence’ is, of course, also a long-standing if frequently under-defined concept used by performers, artists, and audience members. It is a phrase used in the attempt to describe the audience’s sense of the performer’s proximity (in time and space), which is tangible during a live performance. Presence is also used explain the strong sense of the audience’s attendance and attention, which is felt by the performer in return. As Martin Esslin writes:

Anyone who has ever acted on a stage will confirm the collective reaction to a play is palpably real. The audience, in some senses, ceases to be an assemblage of isolated individuals; it becomes a collective consciousness. There is nothing mystical about this. (Esslin 1976:24)

As here, performance theorists frequently describe presence as existing in the non-verbal, non-visual communication between the performer and the spectator, and between spectators. Theatre scholar Ian Watson, for example, describes presence in these terms:

stage presence [is] the indirect interaction between actor and spectator, and the connection between the psycho-emotional experience of the actor and its impact on the spectator. (Watson 1995:145)

This is an idea that we can see in reference to other forms of live performance as well, such as music:

in the concert hall even the most introspective performer is playing *for* listeners who are listening *to* him. In recording, the bond is broken: the performer is playing for someone else – we are unlikely to know who. (Sparshott 1987:89)

Or, to take another example from Beckerman, presence can also describe what he terms the physicality of perception. That is, the kinaesthetic awareness of presence that exists between the performer and the audience:

From actual experience performers can sense whether or not a ‘house’ is with them, principally because the degree of muscular tension in the audience telegraphs, before any overt sign, its level of attention. We might very well say that an audience does not see with its eyes but with its lungs, does not hear with its ears but with its skin. (Beckerman 1979:150)

Beckerman describes this sense as part of the daily knowledge of the performer, gained through cumulative acting experience and largely intuitive. He also suggests that it may not be readily accessible to tabulation and measurement, and is ineffable in that the performer ‘knows more than he can tell’ (Beckerman 1979:132).

While it is clearly possible for collective audiences of non-live performances to respond communally, the live performance audience also possesses a communal influence on the act of creation. This is something Herbert Blau reveals in his discussion of the audience's gaze:

there is in the transfixed eyeball a reflection of a coercive power [...] It works upon its object in the security of expressed affection empowered by the object, which is a fetish of the viewing subject to be embraced, absorbed, and adored in the deliciousness of the gaze. (Blau 1990:6)

This description attributes an almost physical power to the audience's gaze, suggesting that all those collective eyes have the power to move, have the power to coerce. This reciprocity, the ability not only for the performer to influence the audience but also for the audience to influence the performance, is a real distinction between live and non-live performances. This mutually manipulative, empathetic relationship between the live audience and the live performer can exist only during live performances. Moreover, if the non-live performer cannot feel the presence of the absent audience, then perhaps as a result the live audience cannot feel the presence of the spatially absent performer. The screen image clearly can project some kind of charisma from star performers, which is constituted in language as the live-like-ness of the audience feeling the presence of the actor. However, I would suggest that this projected presence of great performers does not replicate the bodily presence of all people – the audience cannot bodily experience a performer's physical presence through the eye of a camera. It is, for example, possible to feel acute embarrassment for the live performer in a manner that simply would not make sense with a non-live performer. This is because bodily presence is experienced between co-present people, and is reciprocal or intersubjective.

Intersubjectivity

The reciprocity between performer and audience is clearly significant in terms of live-performance risk and empathy; that is not empathy in feeling *for* a character, but empathy in a feeling *of* the performer. To explore this possibility further, it is worth considering ideas of 'intersubjectivity', here related to live performance but a term borrowed from the work of Edmund Husserl, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's ideas of transcendental phenomenology, and descriptions of the individual's embodied experience of the world. Intersubjectivity is relevant in relation to both the interaction between the collective audience and performer, and between the individual audience members themselves.

Husserl developed the idea of intersubjectivity in response to a problem of how phenomenology could lay claim to be a transcendental philosophy if it is based upon the reduction of all knowledge to the self. If knowledge is based upon the individual experience of the world, how can it approach an 'objectivity world' without falling into 'transcendental solipsism' (Husserl 1960:87)? What, Husserl asked, about other selves?

Thus the problem is stated at first as a special one, namely that of the 'thereness-for-me' of others, and accordingly as the theme of a transcendental theory of experiencing someone else, a transcendental theory of so-called 'empathy'.
(Husserl 1960:92)

The idea of 'thereness-for-me' of others recognises, in a sense, that the phenomenological reduction of knowledge of the world to the individual self is the experience of everyone, as everyone experiences the world subjectively for him or herself. Husserl saw this as a root from which to constitute a transcendental theory of the objective world through multiple subjectivities. Intersubjectivity is therefore subjectivity communalised on the understanding that we do not experience the world only as an individual but as a community and through co-perception.

In Husserl's work, there is also the understanding that we gain our knowledge of the world through the interaction of our body with the world. In other words, the experience of the world is not purely or even directly of the mind, but physical and bodily. Hence, it is possible to see intersubjectivity as empathy not with other minds but with other bodies. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology emphasises this embodied nature of spatial relationships; as Merleau-Ponty writes, 'To be a body, is to be tied to a certain world. [...] Our body is not primarily *in* space: it is of it' (Merleau-Ponty 1962:148). In *Bodied Spaces: Phenomenology and Performance*, Stanton Garner elucidates Merleau-Ponty's work by writing:

The body is that by which I come to know the world, the perceptual ground against which the world has existence for me; at the same time, it is an object in this world. (Garner 1994:50)

Space, therefore, is human space, scaled against the human body and inhabited by the human body. The body is both the vehicle by which we experience the world and an active object within that experience. The idea that we experience the world through our bodies is often assumed, but it needs spelling out. Much philosophy presents itself as conducted in an entirely self-sufficient and self-experiencing mind, continuing the western separation of the mind and body. To counter these assumptions, ecologist and philosopher David Abram presents a succinct exploration of embodied phenomenology:

The body is that mysterious and multifaceted phenomenon that seems always to accompany one's awareness, and indeed to be the very location of one's awareness within the field of appearances. Yet the phenomenal field also contains many *other* bodies, other forms that move and gesture in a fashion similar to one's own. While one's own body is experience, as it were, only from within, these other bodies are experienced from outside. [...] Husserl discerned that there was an inescapable affinity, of affiliation, between these other bodies and one's own. The gestures and expressions of these other bodies, viewed from without, echo

and resonate one's own bodily movements and gestures, experienced from within.
(Abram 1997:37)

Now it is possible to take these ideas of intersubjectivity, and the idea of knowledge as embodied in our physical presence in the world, and apply them to the audience's experience of the live performer. In the context of the common experience of live performance – individual audience members watching a performer in the presence of a number of other people (one, two, or more) – it is possible to see how knowledge of the event is constructed not only by the individual's subjective experience, but through awareness of the subjective experience of others. Or as Jean-Paul Sartre observes:

An audience is primarily an assembly. That is to say, each member of an audience ask himself what he thinks of a play and at the same time what his neighbor is thinking. (Sartre 1976:67)

Beyond that, audiences not only ask what their neighbours are thinking, but feel, bodily, how they are feeling – seeing with the lungs, hearing with the skin. Matching this intersubjective experience within an audience is a similar relationship between individual audience members (as part of the collective audience) and the live performer. Audience members, all of whom have bodies and experience the world through their bodies, are able to empathise with the bodily presence of the performer. Indeed, this empathy with performers, awareness of their embodied presence, leads to the communication, or feeling of communication, of the senses of others: whether that is thought, touch, taste, or smell. In short, it is possible to feel the thoughts, actions, pleasures, and pains of *someone else* through an intersubjective empathy with their body: we literally know how they feel and perhaps even feel how they feel. Physical presence, therefore, operates through an embodied empathy with the bodies of others. Live performance reaches especially high levels of intersubjective awareness through the directed gaze and collective concentration of the audience and because of the heightened tension of the performance space.

A succinct example of this awareness of the embodiment of others, our awareness of what might be seen as meta-physicality, can be drawn from the everyday. Lifts, particularly, are contemporary sites where the physical presence of others is experienced without actual physical contact. The confined space, perhaps the lack of air, and a sense of awkwardness, all encourage greater awareness of our surroundings producing a sense of a significant proximity with the lives of others. A similar process occurs in the live-performance venue, where various qualities of space, occasion, and atmosphere all encourage a greater sense of awareness. Specialised performance spaces are designed to enable and enhance these qualities of empathy and intersubjectivity, for, as the theatre designer Iain Mackintosh writes, the intention of theatre architecture is to provide ‘a channel for energy’ to be carried from performer to audience and back to performer (Mackintosh 1993:172). This is particularly the case with horseshoe theatres, studio spaces, or theatres-in-the-round all of which allow audiences to keep each other in view and in contact mentally and bodily. When redesigning the Royal Court Theatre, reopened in February 2000, theatre consultant Maxwell Hutchison was alert to these aspects: seeking to use eye to eye and thigh to thigh contact between the audience ‘to return the energy to the stage in some very mysterious way’ (Hutchison 2000:Radio 4). (The inclusion of leather seats, a luxurious but important addition, was intended to further encourage bodily and sensual awareness.)

(c) The Promise of Presence

Ideas of spatial presence are, as is clear, as difficult to describe, pin-down, and quantify as are descriptions of the importance of temporal presence. Spatial presence is an elusive and multifaceted concept, the significance of which rests as much with its seductive qualities, and the promise of its delivery, as it does with any quantifiable reality. Marking the significance of such ideas is their frequent expression across art forms and across commentators. For, just as with temporal presence, part of the significance of spatial presence is its promise. The expectation of the elements examined – the physical presence of the performer, the social

presence of the audience, and the intersubjectivity between the two – is what is of real significance, and is what causes live events to be embedded with expectations of ‘liveness’.

Once again, therefore, I am suggesting that the promise of live-performance presence is delivered partly as a result of that promise. The justifications for this conclusion are perhaps questionable, resting to some extent on the idea that the discourses about live performance play a meaningful role in establishing presence as an important, experiential, and real phenomenon. That such talk, such discourse, can indeed construct the world of its subject is examined in the following chapter. Meanwhile, my aim in this chapter has been to isolate a number of ideas about the particularities of live performance that I can take forwards. Live performance’s temporality, its existence only within the time of its creation, is the first point; the second is its physicality, its existence only in the space of its creation. Additionally, this chapter has, I hope, clearly demonstrated that there exists an ideology of live performance that promises these elements of presence.

Thinking about how to respond to this promise, it is worth asking what we might understand by terms such as ‘presence’, ‘aura’, or ‘intersubjectivity’. It is noticeable how discussions of live performance quickly shade into a language that is slightly metaphorical. This includes the description running through this chapter of liveness as performance in the here and now, of experiencing through the skin, or through the eyes’ transfixing gaze. Such metaphorical language can be accused of slipping into the mystical (Auslander 1999:2), the unreflective (Varney and Fensham 2000:91), or the sentimental (Copeland 1990:42). The foregoing discussion has attempted to rebut such criticisms, but has not done so neutrally. For, as Blau rightly notes, there is a significant ideological implication to these issues, one revealed in how we perceive and define audiences:

How we think about an audience is a function of how we think about ourselves, social institutions, epistemological processes, what is knowable, what not, and

how, if at all, we may accommodate the urge for collective experience.

(Blau 1990:28)

Similarly, how we think of presence, and perhaps of liveness as whole, reflects how we think of ourselves and of society; the perception of liveness in this context is clearly ideological.

My next interest is therefore to trace these perceptions and ideological valuations of live performance. In this chapter, I have employed commentators, critics, and practitioners who have written and discussed live performance directly. The language they employ marks how they have thought about such things as audiences, presence, and risk; their language constitutes their perceptions of liveness. To address this question further, the following chapters will look at other discourses of live performance, considering how they too shape and are shaped by what we perceive as the liveness of live performance.

Chapter Two: Audience Talk

Part One: Talk as Discourse

The debate in the previous chapter about what it is to experience live performance invites substantiation through the addition of actual descriptions of audience experiences. Such descriptions could be located in written sources, such as reviews, but will also be present (if much more fleetingly) in informal spoken discourse. People who see live performances talk about their experiences. This chapter examines such audience talk as a discourse representing live performance, and considers the implications of the very attempt of any examination. Spoken discourses are elusive, transient, and disappear almost as they come into being. It is only possible to study audience talk, therefore, through intervention against transience: through the staging and recording of conversations, and through direct and deliberate enquiry. This means that the methods of research, of material compilation, and perhaps even the very attempt to collect material have the potential to be determining components in any enquiry; the activity of research needs to be recognised as potentially crucial to the outcomes of the research.

The instinctive hunch is that live-performance talk should provide access to the experience of live performance. This itself, however, is a primary assumption that needs reconsidering more thoroughly. Even before collecting or considering any material, it is necessary to enquire just what kind of access to audience experiences such talk might provide. In his *Introduction to the Sociology of Music*, Theodor Adorno provides a sceptical response to such a question, first suggesting that, for any access to artistic experiences, in-depth qualitative research is required. This, however, Adorno qualifies with the observation of fundamental difficulties:

Musical introspection is a most uncertain thing. Besides, most people who have not mastered the technical terminology will encounter insurmountable obstacles in verbalising their own musical experiences, quite apart from the fact that the verbal expression itself is already prefiltered and its value for a knowledge of primary reactions is thus doubly questionable. (Adorno 1976:4)

In response to these comments, it is necessary to separate out Adorno's main observation, which I agree with, from his conclusions, which I am unsure about. First, Adorno identifies the primary problem, which also concerns this chapter: namely, the difficulty of talking about artistic experiences. However, he seems to describe this difficulty as existing only for non-expert listeners, and as being significantly less of a problem for experts sharing a developed technical vocabulary. Similar points are frequently made in relation to other arts: for example, both Martin Esslin, in *Anatomy of Drama* (Esslin 1976:55-66), and Janet Adshead, in *Dance Analysis* (Adshead 1988), suggest that the solution to the difficulty of articulating experiences is the development of a strong technical vocabulary. While allowing that music in particular does possess a well-formulated technical vocabulary, I would dispute these arguments. Mastery of such vocabulary does no doubt aid verbalisation and communication – if significantly only to other people with equal and identical mastery, the shared quality of the vocabulary being as important as its technicality – but it does not solve all the problems and is far from always satisfactory. A quick reading of any discourse on music, however expert, soon reveals the frequent employment of vocabulary far from technical and far from codified. Indeed, the mixing of technical and non-technical language is something often observed in music criticism, where – whether praised or condemned – both languages can appear equally prominent if very different from each other. A passage of criticism by Donald Francis Tovey, for example:

A violin figure hovers like the Spirit of God moving on the face of the waters, while the orchestral bass throbs slowly and the voices work out a symmetrical movement on imitative sequences of a simple chord-theme, the bottom note of which is often quite other than what we would expect. (Evans 1990:8)

As Martyn Evans points out in *Listening to Music*, passages such as this combine technical vocabulary, which is to a certain extent objective and verifiable, with figurative imagery, which is not only subjective and non-technical but also impossible to pin down to a single meaning. This is certainly the case, and Tovey is a good example of a writer who would adapt his verbal register for particular readerships. He could be wholly 'technical' for those with expert knowledge, wholly metaphorical and evocative for 'lay' listeners, or (more often) a mixture of the two, as here. Further, on this point of knowing his readers, it is true that 'hovers like the Spirit of God' is figurative, but Tovey could have been sure that his readers would be familiar with the relevant passage in the Bible. Like technical vocabulary, figurative language also depends on being shared for comprehension. Echoing many of Evans' observations, Frank Sibley suggests in 'Making Music Our Own' that everyone who discusses music uses such extra-musical terms. Sibley argues that this additional language is essential, as technical vocabulary may articulate the character and qualities of music, but does 'little to explain why music may engage us as appreciative listeners' (Sibley 1993:168). The necessity of reaching for this non-technical vocabulary illustrates that even for experts verbalisation poses no easily surmountable problems.

Adorno's second conclusion is equally interesting, but again its significance is questionable. He correctly observes that verbal expressions are pre-filtered, mediated by consciousness and by language itself. Consequently, Adorno suggests, such expressions do not present a perfect access to, or knowledge of, primary reactions; any attempt, employing any method, to externalise experience already removes it from the original experience. However, verbal expressions do indisputably provide access to conscious reactions, formulations, and attitudes. Further, the fact that such expressions are mediated, combined with the imperfect and problematic nature of verbalisation, means that Adorno is describing not only the crux of the problem, but also the actual significance of such expressions. When carefully considered, attempts to articulate experiences in language have great value in revealing individual and social perceptions of music and all live performances. Talk about the experience of

live performance – imperfect, mediated by language, and reflecting either conscious choice of words or employment of a culturally established and shared vocabulary – provides a previously unexamined window into the cultural perception of liveness. As utilised in other fields, such examination is described in terms of ‘discursive psychology’ or ‘discourse analysis’.

Discourse Analysis

While there are many different strands of discourse analysis, they all share a common interest in the significance of language and the production of meaning through language. In *Applied Discourse Analysis*, Carla Willig introduces the methodology as

concerned with the ways in which language constructs objects, subjects and experiences, including subjectivity and a sense of self. Discourse analysts conceptualise language as constitutive of experience rather than representational or reflective. (Willig 1999:2)

The important point is that the interest in language is held for its own sake, and not as part of an attempt to get through language to a truth, reality, or original experience outside of language. Discourse analysis maintains that we do not only use language to describe the world, but also to constitute it. Its interest is not in asking *what* things are, but examining *how* people construct things through their use of language. For such an approach, experiences, personal responses, and ideas rooted in social interactions – such as prejudices, jealousies, or personal identities – are not things that can be discovered, ‘but are created by the language that is used to describe them’ (Burman and Parker 1993:1).

The differences that discourse analysis suggests between linguistic ‘descriptions’ and ‘constructions’ of the world are not stable or universally applicable. Language may wholly construct non-physical things, such as emotions or experiences, with things

concretely of the world – whether molehills or mountains – constructed, or ‘constituted’, more in terms of the values expressed about them. The greater something has a purely linguistic existence, the greater is the writ of discourse analysis. One example of this is the writing of history, where the discovery of ‘facts’ plays between existence purely in language and existence in the world. Roland Barthes even suggests, in ‘The Discourse of History’, that history is the only discourse that operates in the context of a subject accessible only through the discourse (Barthes 1981). Language does not construct the actual events of history, the primary entities, but it certainly constitutes their position within experience and the world made meaningful. History is perhaps a particularly appropriate example for us to consider here, as live performance, not unlike the events of history, can be perceived as something by its nature absent from its representing discourses.

Although the examples of applied discourse analysis Willig presents do not include history or performance, they are wide-ranging: from the construction of ‘stress’ in self-help books, through concepts of sexual safety and risk-taking in sex education, to the operation of statements of belief and doubt in police-interview techniques. In all these cases, the writers suggest that language constitutes the reality of attitudes or experiences. Using similar techniques, others have examined the language used by bystanders to describe crimes or accidents they have witnessed. Discourse analysis asks how these descriptions create a conception of the incident and begin to reveal why individuals do or do not intervene. Here the important point is not the commonplace observation that there is always more than one way of perceiving things, but that expression significantly formulates perception. In describing things or events people make choices, active selections and unconscious omissions, from a far larger bank of possibilities. These choices are far from random and far from inconsequential; instead they are choices that constitute the nature of, and determine responses to, an event. Discourse analysis focuses attention on how these choices package and thereby constitute perceptions and experiences, looking at linguistic constructions and at consistency or variation between descriptions (J. Potter and Wetherell 1987:33-34).

There are clearly a number of ways to relate these methodologies to the useful examination of live-performance talk. In the light of discourse analysis post-performance conversation becomes more than 'mere' talk; instead it is in some measure constitutive of the experience. So while Adorno's complains that verbal descriptions are of little use in accessing 'primary reactions' to music, discourse analysis would maintain that the verbal expressions of music bring music, or rather the experience and perception of music, into being. Such talk does not simply reflect or surround the experience of live performance, but partly constructs that experience. Attempts to articulate the experience of performance, therefore, constitute perceptions of performance. This does not mean that what live performance 'is' is entirely socially constructed by verbal exchanges ('to be is to be perceived'), with the actual phenomenon irrelevant. Instead, the word 'constitution' suggests perceptions of liveness are drawn from the phenomenon of live performance; that discourses shape and select perceptions from actual experiences and not from nothing.

The previous chapter explored attempts to define what the experience of live performance is, the debate representing an explicit discourse on the nature of liveness. This exchange of ideas established the field of study, the language employed suggesting the values and perceptions shared and contested. While the discourse may not determine an unquestionable concept of what live performance is, the linguistically shared attempts to articulate it as located in time and space constitutes a definite perception of liveness. To follow that formal and explicit discussion of live performance, the present chapter employs techniques of discourse analysis to examine the language used to talk about live performance in informal spoken discourses. Inevitably, the inherent elusiveness of spoken discourses is a major obstacle in any such examination, to get round which I attempted to obtain transcripts and other records of spoken exchanges about live performances. These could then be examined so as to consider how they articulate liveness, the representing discourse constituting cultural perceptions of what live performance is. However, problems with accessing material soon arose.

Part Two: The Search for Material

(a) Sociologists and the Performing Arts

One possible source of material on live-performance talk is such sociological works as examine audiences. The amount of material here, however, is not huge, as J.S.R. Goodlad notes in *A Sociology of Popular Drama*:

Very little research has been done on theatre audience and the satisfaction they experience with the plays they see. (Goodlad 1971:131)

Goodlad published his work in 1971, since when more studies have been conducted into theatre and other performing arts. Most of this sociological work, however, still does not consider audience experiences of the performances, but is primarily interested in audience composition. One reason for this is that there is no widely accepted methodology of researching audience 'satisfaction'.

Demonstrating this, Goodlad himself relates some often very peculiar attempts to access audience experiences, including a State University of Iowa project in the 1950s called the 'Meier Audience Response Recorder'. This project involved providing audience members with a handheld electronic device, which they used to indicate the intensity of their interest in a performance by pushing a switch in one direction or the other. The idea of the project was to 'provide a continuous record of an individual observer's interest through the playing time of a performance' (Goodlad 1971:133). By multiplying out from sample groups, researchers suggested that this device could be used to monitor and understand the responses of audiences more generally. Although the problems with this kind of system are obvious – its crudity and the credulity of the researchers for starters – it is apparently similar to systems used today in American television studios for the testing of new comedy shows. Everything that does not get the audience's (literal) thumb of approval is cut. Indeed, in one episode of *The Simpsons*, Bart, Lisa, and their friend Ralph take part in this kind of experiment for a test screening of 'The Itchy and Scratchy Show'.

David Cohen's script probably illustrates both the cultural acceptance of the technique and its fundamental absurdity:

Man: You each have a knob in front of you. When you like what you see, turn the knob to the right. When you don't like what you see, turn it left.

Ralph: [knob in mouth] My knob tastes funny.

Man: Please refrain from tasting the knob.

Caption: '17% of all children dislike the taste of knobs'.

(D. S. Cohen 1997)

Additionally, as Adorno notes of music in performance, there is a problem with the findings produced by these kinds of projects:

Experiments may tell us about degrees of the intensity of the reaction; they will hardly reach its quality. The literal, perhaps physiological and thus measurable, effects which a specific music exerts – even accelerated pulse rates have been noted – are far from identical with the esthetic experience of a work of art as such.

(Adorno 1976:4)

As Adorno comments, observation of accelerated pulse rates – or the yes/no findings of the Meier Audience Response Recorder and similar devices – provide results that are quantifiable but very much restricted in their insight. (Nor, obviously, can non-verbal research replace the desire to talk about experience and hence the need for language.) Such research, additionally, is uninterested in audience members' verbal articulations of their responses precisely because such expressions are not measurable. However, the implementation of techniques of discourse analysis could potentially reveal how audience-talk does provide access to the aesthetic experiences. Unfortunately, although actively engaged with language, such analysis appears to have paid little attention to the expression of the experience of art in general, or live performance in particular. A few exceptions to this, employing discourses analysis in sociological research, are worth noting.

Frank Coppieters, a Belgian performance theorist, conducted some interesting 'empirical research' into theatre performances in the 1970s and early 1980s. A 1981 article, 'Performance and Perception', records his methodology, with examples drawn from work conducted in the United Kingdom with The People Show. Coppieters describes his methods of analysis as the result of attempts to get away from quantifiable statistical analysis and what he terms the treatment of people as things. Instead, he takes a qualitative approach, considering how theatre exists in the audience's social lives. As he notes of the findings:

In dealing with accounts it is the task of the investigator to reveal how situations, events and actions are rendered meaningful within the terms of reference of the person giving the account. (Coppieters 1980-81:36-37)

However, although he is employing what could be termed discourse analysis, Coppieters makes no direct comments about the language used in the responses. Nor is he primarily interested in how the audience members communicate the experience of the performance to one another, an area where the shared quality of the language is as significant as with technical musical vocabulary. But, such shared language of music listeners *is* the subject of a short study by Keith Harris, titled '*Music is My Life*'?, which engages discourse analysis with the conversation of members of a 'music based subculture', namely fans of death metal group Obituary. Unfortunately, from my point of view, Harris is less concerned with how the actual music is discussed than in how language defines the group as a group, how it constructs their relationship with music, and how the individuals 'construct the world through talk' (Harris 1997:5).

The enquiry into the use of music in society is the subject of two further publications, one British, one American: Tia DeNora's *Music in Everyday Life* (DeNora 2000), and *My Music* by Susan Crafts, Daniel Cavicchi, and Charles Keil (Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil 1993). DeNora's work aims to study the 'use of music and effect of music', considering the playing of music in (among other places) shops, homes, and aerobics classes. The closest she comes to discussing live performance is an investigation into

karaoke; this suggests by omission that music in live performance is explicitly *not* music in everyday life: replicating Kathleen Higgins' suggestion that audiences today only experience music live in 'aberrant cases' (Gracyk 1997:139). DeNora provides commentary on her research for the reader, very much filtering her interviews through analysis. In contrast, after a brief introduction, *My Music* presents the full text of 41 interviews with individuals of 'diverse tastes and backgrounds', aged from four to 83, in Buffalo, New York State. Again the attempt is to discover how music is 'used' by individuals in day-to-day life, seeking to make public the 'expression of things that are generally kept private' (Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil 1993:x). Almost all of the interviews concern the discussion of recorded music, with lots of references to the selection of music to suit or alter mood, the use of music as background noise, and the compartmentalising of music into genres liked or not liked. The similarities with Harris' work on this point are evident: choice of music is a method of self-definition, language also performing an important role in defining such musical identity.

It is worth making a general comment about the starting question that all 41 *My Music* interviews pose: 'What is music about for you?' Here, in the project's very title and in the dominant responses, the enquiry is very much into music as an individual activity. In this respect, it is telling that the interviews are predominantly about recorded music, the experience of which is presented as very much *not* a social activity, emblematically experienced on a walkman through headphones – my music, not our music. The contrast with the few portrayals of live music, experienced socially, shared, and not of the everyday, is strong and persisting. These few examples do provide valuable material for my own purposes, and I will introduce particular extracts from the *My Music* interviews as they become relevant in the following discussion.

(b) Arts Market Research

In terms of interview-based research directed at live performance, another hopeful source is the large body of existing arts market research material. The greater part of this research is quantitative, primarily interested in measuring some aspect or other of audience attendance. The reports therefore contain vast amounts of information relating to audience profile and basic demographics: age, sex, educational background, employment etc. As with sociological studies looking at the composition of audiences, this work is relevant in so far as different social groups may have different shared languages and methods of communicating their experiences. Other material can be more directed, with the intention, for example, of trying to pin down arts going habits or describing the frequency of visits to different kinds of art events. Quantitative research can also begin to measure attitudes to venues or company profiles, booking patterns, awareness of event sponsors, response to publicity material, and other media habits such as newspaper, radio, and television consumption. Most arts market research does not intend to consider social groups in the detail of Harris' study; instead, quantitative research is grounded almost entirely in terms of 'customers' and 'consumption' (interestingly rarely 'product' – unlike other market research, for reasons that will become clear.) In short, the intention is to identify the 'target audience', and arts marketing often divides the public into targeting categories: attenders, irregular attenders, potential attenders, and non-attenders. The primary aims of the research being to identify methods of shifting the second and third groups into the first category. Quantitative research relies on the premise that audiences consist of individuals who share economic, social, and educational backgrounds; audiences are therefore perceived as largely homogeneous entities. Arts marketing is in a sense the practical investigation and implementation of Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical description of the workings of 'cultural capital'.

In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Bourdieu studies the economy of cultural goods, examining the 'conditions in which consumers of cultural goods and their taste for them, are produced' (Bourdieu 1984:1). Bourdieu's work is an examination of the relationship between cultural practices, education, and

social background. He seeks to elucidate how the capacity to 'see' (i.e. to appreciate) is a function of knowledge and the ability to read and decipher cultural activities – itself the result of a body of 'cultural capital'. I will return to the implications of these ideas for this chapter later, particularly when looking at ideas of expectations, knowledge, and motivation. Where the matter at hand is concerned, however, Bourdieu's work is interesting as it sits at a crossroads between studies that consider audiences but ignore their artistic responses, and more philosophical works (represented by the commentaries cited in Chapter One) that discuss aesthetics without any reference to actual audiences. Most sociological work ignores aesthetics entirely, and even Bourdieu's approach does not seek to tie 'cultural capital' to the particular experience of particular performances. Arts market research is implicitly based upon Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and the description of the consumption of art, extending this practically with quantitative investigations. Even here, however, actual performances, audience aesthetics, and live-performance talk, remains allusive.

(c) Qualitative Research

For reasons of cost and efficiency, most quantitative research is obtained by questionnaires, conducted either by self-completion or by short structured interviews. This method suffers from a range of drawbacks concerning completion rates, scope, bias, and the inability to access complex issues. The limited ability of quantitative research to access even such basic questions as why people do or do not attend arts events has led to the conducting of an increasing amount of qualitative research, particularly since the late 1980s. Qualitative research may employ questionnaires as a starting point, to identify subjects for example, but then moves on to in-depth interviews on a one-on-one basis or in chaired discussion groups. Apart from being more expensive, the results of this kind of research are much more difficult to interpret and impossible to measure numerically. It has the potential, however, to be of much more interest and illumination where this project is concerned.

To obtain a wide range of qualitative arts market research I accessed the Scottish Arts Council and The Audience Business libraries in Scotland, and the Arts Council of England library in London, from where I obtained the largest amount of material. I obtained further research from arts marketing agencies, although nothing beyond the already published, and from The Royal Court Theatre, London. The material gathered from all these sources was not, however, entirely satisfactory for my purposes for a number of reasons. The first is that, while qualitative methods were now being employed, and more complex questions being asked, the research still tends to maintain a very narrow consumer-driven focus. A 1993 Arts Council of England paper by Caroline Gardiner on the 'Making Effective use of Audience Research' makes this focus clear:

The aesthetic experience is not easily researched or quantified, yet for many arts managers the most crucial question of all is 'What makes people come?' [...] Increasingly, 'focus', or discussion groups with a qualitative emphasis, are being commissioned by arts organisations, in a bid to discover not only why people come, but why they do not. (Gardiner 1993:4)

Having repeated the observation that audience responses are difficult to access, this paper employs the tellingly numeric and reductive phrase 'quantified', pointing towards the real interests of arts market research. Aesthetic experience is reduced to a question of finding out what makes people attend. The introductory rubric of nearly all the qualitative research obtained echoes this objective, all the research structured around the familiar marketing concept of 'target audiences'. For example, a 1983 Greater London Council report into increasing the 'usership' of the South Bank Centre:

Following a 'benchmark' study [of quantitative work], it was decided to conduct a small-scale qualitative research project amongst heavy, light and non-users of the South Bank concert halls. The purpose of this would be to explore the reasons behind concert-going/non-concert-going compared with alternative forms of

entertainment and to try to clarify the factors which will/will not motivate people to come to concerts at the South Bank. (Unit 2 1983:1)

Again it is worth noting the telling use of non-aesthetic words here – ‘use’ not enjoy – alongside other consumerist phrases such as ‘traffic’ and ‘motivation’; the language being very much reminiscent of Bourdieu’s terminology of cultural capital. In addition to such implicit details, the overall tone of these reports soon demonstrates that the ‘aesthetic experience’, identified by Gardiner as essential knowledge, continues to be ignored in favour of other more measurable and consumerist aspects. The questions asked are exactly these: ‘Why do people come?’ and ‘Why don’t people come?’ Not, ‘What are people’s experiences?’ Some useful material does result from this research, such as the movement from ideas of ‘motivation’ and ‘expectations’ to the more interesting concept of ‘risk’, which I will examine later in this chapter. What is abundantly clear, however, is that the research almost never asks about the particular performance event or the aesthetic experience.

A 1990 paper for *Leisure and Arts Research* by Peter Hodgson provides a useful description of my experience of this black hole in arts market research:

the subjects of these audience surveys seem to concentrate on non-artistic areas; if opera and other theatre administrators are really interested in the views of their customers, why fight shy of ‘customer satisfaction’ questions assessing performance quality? [...] Or is the concept that opera is a ‘product’ which audiences (the ‘consumers’) might accept or reject on quality grounds too painful to consider? (Hodgson 1990:13)

The non-artistic areas that Hodgson identifies research as focusing on can be summed-up by the phrase ‘usership’. Most audience research focuses on aspects forming a background to the attending of an event – social considerations, venue facilities and location, transport, comparative expense, competition from other forms of entertainment – or on similar generalisations, such as expectations, feelings towards theatre/opera/dance ‘in general’, value for money. Audience – or rather (and

in this context appropriately) consumer – satisfaction is something measured in terms of these aspects, but is not asked about in relation to the performance as such.

There are, naturally, a number of caveats that need to be added to these criticisms. What is needed is not, as Hodgson also points out, superficial questions along the lines of ‘Which are your favourite operas?’ Such ‘product’ research would inevitably only produce a list of smash-hits from headline acts and famous names. In addition, the fear that any research into aesthetic experiences would result in programming for the lowest common denominator must be acknowledged. These concerns stem from the doctrine that, unlike marketing in general, arts marketing is not ‘product-led’; the intention is not to find and devise a product to suit the market place, but rather to find a market for an already existing product. Such arguments are not, however, central to this chapter. Nor do I believe that the desire to protect the artistic ‘right to fail’ would really be affected (except positively) by truly qualitative, in-depth, performance specific research in which audience members are asked (in group discussions or one-on-one interviews) what they thought and how they responded to a performance. Such research could then be analysed with the interest not on explicit value judgements of particular performances, but instead for indications of implicit perceptions and beliefs embodied in language (not least concerning liveness).

The largely consumer-orientated focus of arts market research was the primary problem I faced in this chapter. Added to this was a second difficulty: all of the research findings and other documents held in the libraries are heavily edited and mediated. From my perspective, therefore, arts market research first suffers from the problem of providing no, or very little, truly aesthetic discourse. This disappointment is further compounded by an editing down of all the participants’ actual words to what researchers decide is the main interest. As the research was originated without any interest in audience impressions, or discourses concerning aesthetic experiences, it is not surprising that few comments of this nature are to be found in the final reports. With only a few exceptions are any remarks provided about particular performances. For example, a 1988 report into audiences attending a contemporary

dance season at the Palace Theatre, London, observes:

Invariably, they [the respondents] knew a great deal about the companies they were watching, and often used esoteric language [!] to describe particular aspects of dance. (Wood 1988:7)

What exactly is meant by this is left to the imagination; this tantalising glimpse not being followed up by details of what that ‘esoteric’ language looks like, but instead much more market-focused notes regarding audience expectations. Other reports present many similar examples of frustrating editing and interpretation, often only providing the reader with the researcher’s overview that could display generalisations, assumptions, or explicit readings of implicit statements. Most importantly, the editing simply prevents the accessing of the original words of the respondents, and all attempts to obtain full transcripts from research agencies were unsuccessful.

However, it should be noted that if arts market research is seen and valued according to its own ambitions then we cannot really hold these observations as criticisms. Indeed, Adorno’s notes on the principles of the sociology of music are worth returning to here, as he writes:

Asked to say offhand what a sociology of music is, one would probably start by defining it as knowledge of the relation between music and the socially organised individuals who listen to it. Such knowledge would call for the most extensive empirical research. But it could not be productively undertaken, would not rise above the compilation of inarticulate facts, if the problems were not already structured in theory – if we did not know what is relevant and what we want to inform ourselves about. (Adorno 1976:1)

Adorno therefore identifies the need to know in advance what you want to find out, and to ask specific questions of the research – perhaps there is even the suggestion of a need to know the answers in advance. The question here is of the nature of

empiricism, of facts, and the realisation that facts do not speak for themselves. As Adorno insists is necessary, arts market research asks clear questions of its research, perhaps having the answers in mind as it asks them, and does not leave its findings to speak for themselves. Using the terminology of discourse analysis, therefore, it is clear that arts market research constitutes its subject in the language it employs to discuss its subject: particularly with phrases such as 'user-ship', 'consumers', 'target audiences', 'uptake', and 'customer satisfaction'.

That we can treat arts market research as a discourse of live performance in its own right is worth considering. After all, the questions, grammar, and internal logic of such research expresses and constructs a set of values and interests held about its subject. It is therefore profitable to look, in the manner of discourse analysis as I have been doing, at the structure, language, rubric, and ambitions of market research. Another starting point would be to ask how live-performance research differs in language or intention from other non-live arts research, such as that into museum or gallery attendance. If arts market research is a discourse in its own right, then it could be more beneficial to examine it as such, rather than trying to use it as a method of accessing another discourse – a spoken discourse – somehow behind it, and contained within it, but not it in itself. Seen as such, arts market research is a discourse constituting its own particular representation of live performance, worth considering alongside other discourses such as publicity material, performance theory, and written criticism.

However, still maintaining the intention of examining live-performance talk, and bearing in mind these significant setbacks, I did manage to obtain a degree of useful material originating from qualitative arts market research. The greater part of this was to do with attitudes to live performance – again displaying the consumerist focus of the research – while some relevant comments can also be made with regards to audience knowledge and expectations. This will be considered through the application of techniques of discourse analysis and in the light of the perception of live performance discussed in Chapter One. However, before looking at the material it is necessary to comment in advance about the way it is dealt with: for reasons of

clarity and directness, the following discussion borrows some of the language of arts market research when dealing with research findings. I therefore employ words such as 'audiences', 'attenders', and 'respondents' as they are used in the research discussed: hence, the phrase 'for the audience' is shorthand for 'for the audience as represented by respondents in the research'. I am making this usage transparent, as my discussion does not intend, as the research often implies, to suggest that we should perceive audiences as homogenous or easily categorised entities.

Part Three: The Material Discovered

(a) Specialness

A conspicuous element found in all the research material – whether focusing on dance, music, or theatre – are the various conceptions of 'specialness'. As DeNora implies, by omission at least, live music is precisely not of the everyday, and at the more mundane level the concept of specialness revolves around expressions of a visit to the theatre (opera, ballet, concert hall etc) being 'a night out'. Often a social event, going to a live performance might also involve dressing-up, a meal in a restaurant, meeting friends, the marking of a special occasion, or other form of treat.

Respondents see attending a live-performance event as involving planning, booking, anticipation, and expectation. It is something looked forward to, directly contrasted by research respondents with the cinema, which is not considered special in the same way, and even more so with individual or home use of recorded media. Examples of this can be drawn from almost all the research findings, from the comments of an 'irregular' attender aged 18-20:

It makes a change ... you can't turn up at the theatre in jeans and a T-shirt on the spur of the moment ... I quite like that. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:11)

To remarks from an older theatre regular, which portray concert going almost as a sexual act complete with 'foreplay' and 'mainplay':

It's special, I wear my best dress and get all ready, and we go for a meal – it's really a special occasion, the build-up to it. (Unit 2 1983:19)

The research findings also include examples that underline these sentiments as a result of the obverse response to specialness. For some respondents, the specialness of live performance is a hindrance to attending, resulting from the need to plan ahead or unfamiliarity with the surroundings. Other fears revolve around the fact that it *is* a social event, the need to find someone to go with, and the worry that they and you will not like the performance – or agree about it. Additionally, and as a concrete example of the sometimes tribal nature of arts attendance, respondents express the fear that the other people attending will be different from them and that they will not 'fit in'. More unusually, some respondents perceive this social specialness as mere trappings, a distraction from the seriousness of the artistic event. Additionally, one report suggests that for regular concert attenders though the event may be considered a special occasion it is very much not a social occasion (Harris Research Centre 1993:19). In contrast to such articulations of live performance, the impression of recorded music presented in *My Music* – although important to the individual – could rarely match this description (whether positive or negative) of 'special'. As one example puts it:

Music is just part of life, like air. You live with it all the time, so it's tough to judge what it means to you. [...] I turn on the radio and it's there in the morning; it's there when I drive; it's there when I go out.

– If it isn't there do you miss it?

No. (Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil 1993:109)

The specialness or strangeness, unusualness, or unfamiliarity of the live-performance event displays the beginnings of an interesting paradox between the love of the special occasion and the fear of the unknown. For example, many of the respondents, particularly younger or less regular attenders, express concern about not knowing

what to expect. This unpredictability can easily cross over from being a good thing (it makes it special) to being bad – or even both at the same time:

You don't know what it's like, it's not like a film, you've read the reviews ... a play can change each night ... that can be a really good thing, it can be painfully bad. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:11)

(b) Risk

For most respondents it is clear that – alongside the expectations, the planning, and indeed the expense that goes into attending an event – there is also the careful consideration of possibilities of 'risk'. Consistently, arts research suggests that audiences see attending a live performance as riskier than forms of non-live entertainment. Consequently, conservatism, and a desire to know what to expect, tempers the delight in specialness. The risk is appreciated, the risk adds to and is part of the specialness, but accompanying this is a paradoxical desire for safety. There is a desire for a kind of pre-fulfilled expectation, or at least the certain knowledge that the expectations will be met. To a certain extent, this results in the desire for pieces of music, composers, writers, and actors that audiences have already heard or seen before. The considerations are clear:

It's pretty expensive to go 'on spec' not knowing if you will enjoy it or not. (Unit 2 1983:24)

This articulation of 'pretty expensive' is a statement of expense in simple financial terms, and terms of time, planning, social prestige, and potential awkwardness. But more important for most respondents is expression of expense in more far-reaching calculations of risk.

The paradox is simple: live performance is valued because it is held to be special; but also feared and rejected because in being special there is a risk that it will be too

different, too unusual, or too strange. Demonstrating the importance of risk, a qualitative study of current perspectives of contemporary music reveals some interesting comments from regular attenders. Asked about the appeal of contemporary music their replies included:

It's shocking and surprising and you don't sleep because of it.

You escape from the family, part with money, and take a risk.

It's fresh, it's absolutely new, it's never been heard, it's exciting. (Millward Brown Market Research Ltd 1991)

Even among regular attenders, however, this appeal of the new also marked the beginnings of a shift towards a more compromised and hesitant idea of the risk involved:

Sort of dangerous in a way, contemporary, because it is present, hasn't stood the test of time, you have to make your own mind up

This contemporary stuff or whatever you want to call it ... I am supposed to have an opinion, and everybody is a little bit frightened, and maybe it's latching on to other people's opinion of the music in phrases or whatever to describe it
(Millward Brown Market Research Ltd 1991)

Here, in the experience of contemporary music, respondents clearly express the perception of the danger, and the performative risk, of all live artistic events. The connection between research detailing audiences' anxieties about knowledge and expectations and work such as Bourdieu's on cultural capital is illuminating. The fear expressed is that without the requisite information or interpretative skills a cultural experience becomes lost in a chaos of sounds, rhythms, and random visions. Coppieters observes similar responses among audiences to The People Show's non-traditional theatre projects:

going to a 'new' spectacle is more risky than going to a traditional one. The traditional theatre frame is a programmed life [...] the contours of which are relatively clear and predictable. In contrast, the new theatre tends to be more like a real life event with more elements of unexpectedness about it. (Coppieters 1980-81:38)

In many ways, it is much more comfortable to attend an event about which something is known: knowing what to expect, what to look out for, and even how to respond. Perhaps, as Linda Dusman suggests, the unheard-before quality of much contemporary music places the audience in a position of co-creator in contrast to the familiarity and risk-free situation of what she terms 'live reproductions' (Dusman 1994:140). Indeed, in the challenge, or paradox, between the special and the strange, contemporary orchestral music – and perhaps also contemporary dance and non-text based theatre – hold particularly vulnerable positions. With traditional script-based theatre (excepting perhaps 'director's theatre'), classical ballet, or performances from the canon of classical music the audience will be able to attend the event with a body of prior knowledge — thereby minimising risk. With canonical forms – even in cases where content is unknown – genre and style are familiar. In the social context of the live-performance experience it is possible that the fear of the unknown is intensified by the awareness of the other people in the auditorium, and the fear that they have the knowledge or appreciation that you might be lacking yourself.

(c) The Live Event as a Special Event

The key question, and one especially difficult to answer, is the extent to which this paradox inherent in specialness (which I would define as 'risk') has anything to do with the fact that it is live performance that is being talked about. The foregoing examples of live-performance talk suggest that liveness is perceived as special in three areas: as a social occasion; in contrast to the everyday experience of non-live performance; and with regards to unknown expectations and performative risk.

Perhaps, however, these concepts of specialness are simply part of a socially constructed and market-promoted idea of what an evening out at the theatre or concert hall should be like. Moreover, perhaps live-performance events are considered special simply because they have become a more unusual experience: marginalised in today's culture and different only in that they are not non-live performances. Alternatively, as I argued in the previous chapter, the experience of performative risk is the result of the experience of something inherently live. Arts market research demonstrates that audiences *do* articulate liveness as special: but is this a social construction resulting from a range of social forces few to do with actual experiences? Or is it, as discourse analysis might suggest, demonstration of how audiences constitute their experiences of live performances through shared talk?

To a certain extent, because of the powerful influence of marketing, the socially constructed (or perhaps enforced) idea of specialness is persuasive. Discovering that one way to sell live performance is as special, as a packaged 'night at the theatre', arts marketers do seek to create liveness as branded 'specialness': much as Disney hypes the liveness of their *Beauty and Beast* with the slogan 'The Magic Comes Alive On Stage' and the Edinburgh International Festival defines itself as a celebration of live arts. Audiences perhaps adopt the language, perspective, and valuation of liveness directly from arts marketing. Instead of something drawn from live performance, we could see 'specialness' as something forced onto and constructing live performance – no longer special because it is live, but live because it is special. This is certainly the interpretation that commentators such as Philip Auslander would take: arguing that ideas of the value of liveness are not resident in any essential qualities of live performance but the result of social construction and projection. Reinforcing this vision of the culturally constructed idea of liveness there is evidence suggesting that audiences are not only susceptible to marketing, but also actively dependent on publicity material. Several pieces of research suggest that, to counter their fears of attending 'obscure' live-performance events, audiences often look to official publicity material for answers, thereby enabling them to make an informed assessment of the risk involved in attending the performance. Some respondents also thought that publicity copy should provide pointers regarding what

to look out for and details regarding how to make sense of the performance (Artlink 1987:4-9, Arts Marketing Hampshire 1997:2, and Owen and Shibli 1995:6-9)

What emerges from these reports is an impression of audience members dependent on the controlling and defining message of marketing. This suggests that the familiar fear of the powerful critic, repeatedly expressed by performance artists, is misplaced; instead, artists need to look to their colleagues in arts marketing departments. A 1995 British survey into dance audiences at The Crucible suggests that only 2% of respondents made the decision to attend an event on the basis of a review or other media coverage, compared to 61% as the result of some kind of marketing material (Owen and Shibli 1995:6). If these figures are even remotely replicated in terms of the formation of audience opinions, then critics are clearly less influential than are copywriters! This seems unlikely, and in contrast, American research conducted in 1975 suggests that 40% of theatre attenders find reviews as significant in deciding their ticket purchases (Shrum Jnr 1996:127). The difference between these results could be down to any number of factors, from significant cultural trends to the more mundane results of differing survey methods. Both findings, however, suggest that audiences do look for guidance of some sort before booking tickets.

Further evidence for the influence of marketing in constructing the idea of liveness can be seen in the arts market research summaries, which describe how to increase audience attendance. One report, for example, calls for marketing material to be more descriptive of the event and its special appeal, telling the potential audience:

What to look/listen for and how it enjoy it more. They need a persuasive description of the experience of the concert, including the excitement of taking part in a live musical experience. (Unit 2 1983:8)

The job of live-performance marketing, as clearly described here, is therefore to tell people to love it because it is live – literally ‘You’ll Love it Live’ in terms of The Audience Business advertising slogan. The report also suggests marketers explain why live is special, and suggest how to enjoy that specialness. Here it seems that the

valuation and perception of live performance is an entirely constructed phenomenon; a cynical vision in which there is clearly much ammunition for Auslander's arguments. However, I believe that such a judgement is too reductive: something revealed by looking a little further into some of the existing audience research, which suggests a subtler relationship whereby the identity of live performance is constituted out of the articulation of original experiences, not constructed out of nothing but hype.

The joining line between the concept of live performance as a purely constructed 'special' event and as something valued for qualities of 'liveness' can be found in the word (and use of the word) 'occasion'. Again, a starting place can be found in the conclusions of a marketing report on how to increase attendance:

It is also important for Northern Sinfonia concerts to be seen as a sought-after attraction. [...] Making the concert more of a special occasion, a one-off big name event, might attract the first-timers and the half-hearted. (Market and Opinion Research International 1989:11)

As in other examples, there is a prescriptive tone in this report, and the idea of the packaging, promotion, and consumption of 'live' as an entity in itself is apparent. Concerts, it is clear, have to be seen to be sought after to be sought after, and the buzz created around entertainment events (even when non-live) can usefully be thought of in terms of this sense of the live occasion. When marketed as 'occasions', therefore, live-performance events often have a special angle, making them in a sense more live: Jose Carreras at the Royal Crescent in Bath, the now rare appearance of Merce Cunningham on stage, and The Last Night of the Proms are all examples of self-defined occasions. They are not just live performances, but performances defined as especially live. Nor are media-aware audiences necessarily

ignorant of this manipulation:

We're all used to being hyped. Coming to the Hippodrome in June is Cats, the musical, I've booked for it already – the hype is unbelievable, it's everywhere. (Harris Research Centre 1993:33)

Within the discourse of live-performance promotion, the concept of the value of the 'occasion' is clearly constructed: based not on some essential or empirical price, but on perceived value. It does not refer to truth, but creates its own truth. However, such constructions cannot be built on nothing, and while there may be a hierarchy of liveness – based around aspects such as how unusual, notorious, sought after, rare, or well marketed an event is – there is still clearly a recognition of the value of liveness. The constructed marketing discourse, establishing the value of 'live', is based upon a concept of liveness. One interviewee in the *My Music* project, for example, notes her different use of live and recorded music, struggling to articulate the difference but certain that there is one. She continues to note the social aspect of the special occasion, before attempting to describe the experience of live music: 'You were just all around it. Or I should say it was all around you' (Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil 1993:172).

The existence of this real perception of liveness is most clearly presented in market research findings where respondents make direct statements about the value and nature of live performance. The issue is whether these responses are personal formulations or surface echoes of promotional hype; my hunch is the former, as I hope the evidence displays. Following terms used in the previous chapter, I divided these responses between discussions of temporal and spatial liveness. The temporal valuation of live performance by some respondents is clear, and the parallels between these observations and the comments in Chapter One are noticeable:

It's more exciting, it's now. You don't get anything edited out. It doesn't matter if it isn't perfect. That's the excitement, the fact that it may not be perfect. (Harris Research Centre 1993:30)

You just get the atmosphere and feel the performance ... a play can change from performance to performance – it is unique. (Unit 2 1983:19)

It's live, you see it once and once only, it's really of the moment. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:11)

It's wonderful, the feeling that it's really happening at that time and anything could happen. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:11)

Alongside these valuations of a unique temporality are the verbalisations of some kind of vital spatial dimension. This spatial dimension is expressed in several ways – again often matching the discussion in the previous chapter – with respondents talking about the power of simply being there, the collective nature of the audience and communication with other audience members, and communication between the audience and the performer:

The atmosphere. It is very good to be there. Just being part of it, it is a thrill for me to actually be there. (Market and Opinion Research International 1989:2)

I get a buzz watching the audience. (Artlink 1987:14)

The feeling hits you. It is very good, is like an elation, makes you feel, stretches your consciousness, effects you intellectually, feel part of the world. (Artlink 1987:14)

It's like adrenaline going round the whole crowd, you feed off them. The atmosphere is incredible. (Harris Research Centre 1993:31)

You feel part and parcel of it there. (Harris Research Centre 1993:31)

It's live The atmosphere .. the fact that you are part of it. If the audience is responding, the actors respond – there's a communication. (Unit 2 1983:19)

The whole place comes alive. You can feel the actors respond to the atmosphere ... you become part of it. TV carries on if you walk away, but on stage they respond to you. (Unit 2 1983:19)

The performers get a buzz from the audience and that's what makes it live – a radiation if you like ... an unspoken sense of being with kindred spirits. (Unit 2 1983:28)

As far as it is possible to tell from the edited reports, these statements are made in response to prompted discussions about the nature of live performance. Consequently, a certain degree of caution is warranted about the remarks, especially as the research rarely provides detailed descriptions of methodology or places the comments in context. Critics could also point to the similarity between these statements and the language of performance promotion, and suggest a linguistic and value relationship between marketing and the target customer that is possibly circular or even determined. Such criticisms, however, mask the importance of what the examination of live-performance talk actually demonstrates. Looked at more positively, these audience statements represent examples of audience members expressing explicit valuations in a language that they consciously choose. As discourse analysis suggests, such language choices establish how individuals constitute their experience of the world: here the experience, valuation, and perception of live performance. Through the imperfect resources of arts market research, these statements demonstrate a perception of liveness: manifested as special or risky, and publicly experienced and therefore socially shared. This live-performance talk is a representation of liveness, a representation demonstrating how audiences constitute live performance in a shared language, articulating shared values. It is a representation, therefore, of what live performance is to those who experience it.

Part Four: Audience Research Exercise

The virtual non-existence, or non-accessibility, of in-depth live-performance interviews with audience members, particularly about actual performances, is frustrating; but rather than merely complaining it would be more constructive to attempt to conduct some original research for this thesis. While impossible in this context to do this on the desirable scale, as a demonstration-exercise even a small sample of such research has wide-ranging potential. As well as the conclusions that might be drawn from the particular findings – the intrinsic value of which I hope is demonstrated in the following report – the exercise also places markers for future research in terms of methodology and potential outcomes.

With these goals in mind, I took ten students from the University of Edinburgh to a production of *Olga* at the Traverse Theatre on 2 December 2001: a play by Finnish writer Laura Rouhonen, in a Scots-English version by Linda McLean, performed by the Traverse Theatre Company. The students met up in two groups the following day to discuss the performance. I introduced the discussion, chaired the debate loosely and non-directingly, and recorded the results – the transcriptions providing material to examine the discourse of live-performance talk. The methodology employed was similar to that of Coppieters and Harris, with the reasoning behind the approach also being analogous. As Coppieters notes, the intention is ‘not to offer conceptual categories which would influence the phrasing of [respondents’] reactions and opinions’ (Coppieters 1980-81:39). Harris also recognises this danger of the research constructing the object of analysis through pre-definition, something particularly relevant with discourse analysis studies (Harris 1997:5). In particular, therefore, no indication was given of an interest in the performance as live performance. An alternative method would have been to employ a more interventionist methodology, such as a participatory research enquiry seeking to explore in detail how the group responded to the play as a piece of live performance. (It would also be worth speculating about what cognate groups might demonstrate,

discussing different types of performance or displaying different ages and social backgrounds.)

In practice, things did not work out quite as neatly as planned. While the first group went smoothly, for various reasons the second discussion group had only two members. The results therefore form a contrast between a group discussion and a two-way conversation, with the former proving far more useful. I supplemented the discussions with a brief questionnaire that asked some specific questions, primarily quantitative and word associative. Appendix Two provides more background information and the full results of the questionnaires; Appendix Six includes a review of *Olga*. The following is a report on the discussions, picking out details and findings relevant to this project, and making some suggestions as to how the research could be extended.

Exercise Findings

(a) Shared recollection and pleasure in group experience

Although the occasions in the discussions when the speakers were at their most articulate are especially illuminating, their less eloquent moments of conversational exchange are also revealing. Indeed, the first aspect of the discussions to observe is the mutual support provided to each other by the individual group members, which I did not notice so much at the time but is very conspicuous on the recording. This occurs repeatedly, especially in the group discussion, with a background of sounds expressing agreement or recollection supporting whoever happens to be speaking at any moment. These demonstrations of support are in the form of both isolated sounds, distinct words ('umm', 'right', 'yeah'), and longer interjections. I suspect that many of these verbal gestures of support were largely unconscious on the part of the group members, as such conversational tics are habitual and instinctive. Doubtless, many of them form part of the good-manners of conversation, a principal function being to show someone you are listening. (These gestures of support are more prominent on the recording because at the time they were literally background

noise to the principle focus on the speaker.) However, although many of the background interjections constitute the verbal equivalence of eye contact, offering support and confirming attention on the speaker, in this context they are more than simply good conversational practice. They also play a part in what I would describe as affirmation of each individual's — and collectively the group's — memory of the event. The interjections indicate that the listeners agree with the speaker, also affirming the speaker's memory, asserting that his or her recollections match their own. Below is a short example of this, in which (as in other extracts) I have attempted to identify all of the speakers and their contributions, although on occasion this is impossible as the particular becomes drowned in a general murmur:

Elaine – The thing is, that kind of, not madness but eccentricity (Natalie: Umm), was developed at the beginning with her cutting off her shoes (Richard: Yeah), but then it seemed to just go away (Natalie: Yeah; Richard: That's right; Jennifer: That's true; general noises of agreement). She seemed quite (Natalie & Jennifer: Normal) sane (Richard: Normal; general noises of agreement) from then on.

Several aspects are evident in this example, including the good-manners indication of attention ('umm') or general agreement ('yeah'). Accompanying this is a more forthright declaration of support; here over the dropping of the character Olga's more visible eccentricities. Three listeners interject with audible contributions of agreement and recollection; their memory and sense of the event are the same as the principal speaker's, and they want to make that clear. In one case ('that's true') the interjection also suggests a memory inspired: the speaker has reminded this group member of something in the performance they had forgotten. Additionally, some of the listeners undertake to complete the speaker's sentence: 'She seemed quite (normal)'. Completion of each other's sentences is something conventionally expected between people very familiar with one another; yet most of the group members here did not know each other at all. Was familiarity with the event, the shared experience of the performance, a 'substitute' familiarity? Completion of each other's sentences also indicates complete agreement between speaker and listener, and in this case again underlines agreement about the performance recalled. Finally,

a third listener also interjects with 'normal', belatedly prompted to repeat what the other group members had said as a sign of complete agreement and understanding.

These aspects – completion of each other's sentences, interjections of support and recollection, indications of general agreement, and repetitions of what each other say – occur consistently through the group discussion, at least in part displaying mindfulness of a shared experience and the desire to confirm each other's memories. This is present, for example, in explicit reminders of particular moments: 'You know when Rundis rings the doorbell?' Many small illustrations of this are in evidence, surrounding particular incidences of the performance recalled or interpretations made of the production. Often the structure of the conversation is directed by these kind of aspects; another, longer, extract from the transcript indicates this:

Jennifer – I liked the music (Natalie: Umm). I wasn't expecting music, so I thought that was kind of [pause] just nice. I think that I like the music, in and of itself, as well as the way that it was used (Natalie: Yeah).

Edward – I not sure I even (Elaine: No) noticed.

Elaine – I didn't really notice (Natalie: You didn't?) either.

Natalie – You see, I noticed. I always think about music though, in a play, because you think that now it suddenly isn't realistic anymore because suddenly there is music. I always find it kind of jarring (Jennifer: Yeah?), because suddenly, why is there music?

Edward – It was just mood (Jennifer: Yeah) wasn't it? Lots of xylophones (Jennifer: Yes, exactly) (general laughter and agreement).

This extract begins with the kind of conversational tics I would describe as habitual, sounds of agreement and attention. The conversation then moves to a moment of confusion over memory, with some group members recalling an aspect of the performance more than others do. Here, and elsewhere, such disagreements or mis-recollections cause a slight disturbance in the group, indicated by surprised or hesitant tones of voice. Often this prompts an individual to move to back-up their memory by directly asking for support, by providing elaborating detail, or other

justification. Such disturbances also prompt the attempt to resolve the dispute and reach consensus on memory, on what happened, if not agreement on interpretation. Here Edward, who was initially not sure of the particular recollection, makes the first move to resolution by making the effort to remember. The other group members swiftly accept this gesture: 'Yes, exactly'. Laughter ends this particular segment, indicating a group once more comfortable and in agreement. Throughout the discussion, there exists clear demonstration of pleasure in agreement and, in particular, pleasure in agreement over the group experience of the performance. Pleasure, that is, in memory.

This exchange continues:

Jennifer – And it would work, when they were out in the woods and they would send in all that cloud (Natalie: Yeah), white smoke stuff, and then it would be music (Richard: Umm?). That's what it would sound if you were in Finland in the middle of the night.

Richard – I thought it was strange actually. To get back to Yacob [actually Rundis], he was suddenly a bird watcher in that scene (general noises of agreement). Before this he was a waste of space who cleaned old grannies' houses and basically didn't clean them (Jennifer: Yeah) and fell asleep on the couch and was a slob (laughter) and then suddenly he was the most committed bird watcher (Jennifer: In the world) in the world.

The apparently abrupt change in conversation in the above passage, prompted by recollection of a particular scene, in fact runs very smoothly in the group's conversation. The rest of the group instantly recognise the moment the speaker is referring to and are quick to communicate that recognition. Throughout a longish statement by Richard, sounds and words of support can be heard, along with laughter. This support is consummated when a listener moves to complete the speaker's sentence for him. The conversation continues:

Natalie – But that was like his one, cos she kept trying to say there is something about you, like you must have an interest or you must have this. So that bird watching thing was the one thing that made him special. At least he did have one passion, something he could get excited about (pause). And he did mention it kind of, he did just mention it vaguely at the beginning (Jennifer: he did?) With the bearded tit and all that (Jennifer: Ah I missed that). He kept going

Richard – Is that why it was such a big deal when he sold his book on birds?

(Natalie: Yeah yeah; Jennifer: ah right)

Natalie – And also it was a present from his girlfriend.

It is difficult to present the full dimensions of this exchange in a transcript: as here there is an additional element that supports the conversational tics already described but far harder to indicate on paper. I need a stage direction, replacing '(pause)' with '(trails off slightly despondently, before continuing with renewed enthusiasm)', or else some kind of notation indicating a falling tone before suddenly reviving. Through the initial statement above, there are no audible indications of agreement or recognition on the recording; Natalie's fairly long speech is suddenly isolated, without sounds of support from the rest of the group. This is in complete contrast to the similarly extended speech by Richard I examined just before, which the group supports with continual background verbal agreement. Clearly Natalie feels this isolation, as her voice trails off markedly through the phrase 'something he could get excited about', followed by a pause no-one else interrupts. The revival occurs with recollection of a particular moment of the play – elaborating on detail to support memory – which inspires first vague and then stronger recollection on the part of the group. The doubt ('he did?') becomes worried uncertainty ('ah I missed that'), before reaching a relaxed acceptance ('ah right'); meanwhile the original speaker's concern is replaced by a relieved and delighted 'Yeah, yeah!' Once more, a possible disruption to the group's memory moves swiftly to resolution with evident pleasure. A final segment indicates the completion of the group's re-bonding.

Edward – And also he was a bit of a failure as a bird watcher, having done it for ages and Olga comes along and sees the parrot being eaten in mid-air (laughter) (Jennifer: That was really good; Natalie: That was hilarious)

Edward – The best bit of stage stuff (Natalie: was the feathers) was the feathers coming down. That was so funny (laughter).

As indicated here there is a definite sense of shared experience amongst the group, and recognition of that fact. The group demonstrates pleasure in agreement, pleasure in sharing and affirming joint memories, and in contrast doubt and disturbance over unsettled or questioned memories. Often the flow of conversation itself forms a semi-structured comparison and confirmation of memories. The grammar ('do you remember?') and tone ('I didn't notice') of the exchanges indicates the shared group experience and conveys unstated awareness that they will not see the performance again. Together these aspects prompt a greater urgency to share memories and reach consensus. The desire to affirm the memory of live performances, demonstrated in these group dynamics, is also reflected in a wider urgency to document (and thereby 'remember') live performance – this is discussed in detail in Chapter Three. To what extent any of these group dynamics would be demonstrated any differently by participants drawn from a cinema audience is difficult to say, although this is an issue that the group itself discussed and one I will return to later.

(b) Basis of evaluative statements and assessment of the performance

Another distinctive and very prominent conversational habit that emerged in both the group discussion and two-way conversation is in relation to how the participants, individually and collectively, assessed the performance: the manner, that is, in which evaluative statements were formulated and communicated in language on a scale of believable/unbelievable, from true to false. Some extracted examples will make this clearer:

I was convinced
I believed it
It was real
I didn't believe him
Just so alive
That was so false to me
It was so right

As is implicit in all these statements, the speakers conflate 'good' with 'believable' and 'I didn't like' with 'unbelievable'. Two examples make this relationship clear:

Richard – I thought she was really believable, really good.

Elaine – I thought he was very good, very believable

The speakers not only apply these assessments to the performers, but to the production as a whole, where something either feels 'right' or is 'not convincing'. It is very tempting to conclude that many of the judgements 'I liked it' or 'I didn't like it' are simply substituted with judgements based upon a sense of the believable. In turn, the believable is founded upon ideas of realism and the mimetic; the closer something gets to 'realism', the more believable it is, and hence the better it is. In other examples, this relationship is even more explicit:

Elaine – I struggled with that concept (Natalie: Oh yeah, I didn't at all), I didn't think it was that realistic ...

As this particular exchange continues, it becomes clear that the disagreement – which is not over memory, something that provokes movement to consensus, but over interpretation – is over differing judgements of 'realism'. One speaker dislikes a moment for its lack of realism; the other defends it on the same grounds: one speaker found it realistic; the other did not.

However, although the language is grounded in an opposition between believable and not believable, and at times some participants directly criticise the performance for not being realistic, I do not think that 'believability' is entirely conflated with realistic/unrealistic. It is subtler than that, and best summed up in the kind of phrases used by all participants along the lines of 'I didn't get that at all' or 'I didn't see it at all'. These are judgements made as to how the performance matched up to the individual's map of how it should have been. How something should be – how it should work; how things should happen – all *sound* as if they relate to realism, the logic being that something 'right' is something 'real' while something 'wrong' is something 'unreal'. This, I think, prompts the borrowing of the language of realism, but not necessarily the making of such judgements on the basis of realism. Nonetheless, it is possible that the linguistic grounding of such judgements on a believable/unbelievable scale does militate against the assessments of performances resisting dominant ideas of realism. This is something that could usefully be explored in relation to explicitly non-naturalistic productions, and which could also benefit from participatory research into our concept of the 'real' in art.

The grounding of evaluative statements in the language of realism is perhaps not particular to live performance. I suspect such exchanges are also made about films, more naturally perhaps as the language is no doubt borrowed from the genre of 'Classical Hollywood Realism' and less specifically cinema in general. However, with live-performance talk here representing theatre in a borrowed language, the possibility of discourse constituting or constructing its subject becomes acutely urgent. With the language of the dominant media of the non-live directing the manner of the linguistic representation of the live, the identity of the live itself can be subsumed. This would only be a theoretical problem were it not that the borrowed language inadequately expresses, and even begins to conceal, the subtler articulations of the actual experiences of liveness. Illustrating the potential problems of this borrowing of a language – even if not actual borrowing of its values – are the tensions that exist when scales of the cinematic real are applied to live theatre and to live actors in particular. In *Olga* the problem of the actors being described in any

sense as 'unbelievable' was enhanced by their indisputable physical presence, and more particularly by their evident ages.

(c) Presence and Space – The Actors

In the discussions, the exchanges made about the actors' performances were one area where the method of communicating evaluation on a scale of believable/unbelievable was most in evidence. The following passage, for example, discusses the 85 year old character of Olga (played by 66 year old actor Eileen McCallum):

Richard – I thought she was excellent.

Natalie – Yeah brilliant (Jennifer: I did too) (pause). She was just so natural and like relaxed.

Richard – Yeah I thought she was really believable, really good.

Edward – Her rambling were quite believable, I mean they just, just sound just like my grandpa. Talking about whatever and just ...

Richard – Slightly mad as well (laughter).

Natalie – You felt so sorry for her.

In this exchange, purely evaluative words – 'excellent', 'brilliant', and 'good' – are matched by assessments drawing on realism – 'believable', 'natural', and also 'relaxed'. What is also clear is that none of the participants is particularly at home discussing the actors' performances; they lack a clear vocabulary to talk about them beyond the assessment of good and bad. This no doubt encouraged the linkage: good = believable, I like = convinced, I didn't like = unrealistic. The interest in the age of Olga, and the actor playing her, became a repeated theme in the discussion and the attempted assessment of her performance. The following extract comes from the two-way conversation:

Sarah – The woman that played Olga, she was just like amazing.

Marina – (indication of agreement)

Sarah – She was so irritating, when she was supposed to be irritating and she was just really like on those tirades about her life and her childhood it was oh my god. She was just so good at being this loveable old lady, I just thought she was a really good actress.

[...]

Sarah – She was just really human to me.

Marina – Yeah, I don't think a lot of her speeches were that well written (Sarah: no) I think she, I think she (pause) compensated, I just think she was really there. I just think she was she was just very human. I don't know what kind of acting you'd call it, method acting or I don't know, I believed this. The fact that she was an old woman talking about dying looking back on her life (Sarah: Yes, she was an old woman. That helped). The actress is an old woman. The audience is full of old ladies.

Sarah – And she got older and older as the play progress and she was really like shaking at the end. She just really *was* that woman. The walk. She was consistent. Her walk was consistent her mannerisms were consistent (Marina: the stoop). The stoop. Everything about her, she was just very consistent.

It is interesting that at the same time as demonstrating a sophisticated awareness of the different input of the author (not much admired) and the performer (judged excellent), these speakers continue to articulate their evaluative assessments purely on a mimetic scale. While this is a more detailed assessment of the performance, it again comes down to the fact that, in the logical conclusion of method acting, the actor was 'really' old (in all senses of both words). The phrases used – 'Yes, she was an old woman. That helped' and 'She just really *was* that woman' – indicate how with the indisputably real age of the actor the boundary between actor and character becomes increasingly blurred.

The repeated emphasis by both groups on the age of the performer was increased by three aspects, the first being the intimate space of the Traverse Two auditorium – more on which in a moment. Second, I suspect that the age of the group members, all in their twenties, caused them to notice the contrasting age of the performer. While I

do not think it caused them to relate to the young man (Rundis) in response, I do think it prevented an immediate empathy with Olga. That is not to say that it prevented an acute awareness of her as a person; if anything it emphasised it: something I will also come to in a moment, along with the participants' self-declared fascination with the ages of other members of the audience. Finally, however, the possibility of sexual contact between the principal characters prompted alertness to the performer's age. A discussion initially on the performance of Paul Thomas Hickey as Rundis quickly leads to this element. Note again the use of believability as the basis of evaluation:

Natalie – I thought it was brilliant, was that just me?

Elaine – Yeah he was good.

Natalie – He was so vibrant and alive, I just totally believed his character

Jennifer – I didn't believe him until about half way through. I thought he got better (Natalie: Yes) as it went along, and by the end I was convinced.

Edward – I still wasn't sure when I left, because was still kind of freaked out by this relationship (laughter) umm so I was trying to, once I got over my initial disgust I was trying to work out whether I liked him. I think I probably do, I think he was believable in a completely weird and unbelievable situation.

Richard – Yeah, I would say that as well.

The group returns to the possibility of a sexual relationship between Olga and Rundis later, in an extended discussion that once again is phrased in terms of believability and realism (accompanied by a fair amount of defensive laughter). Very apparent, perhaps particularly so for the men, is a sense of distaste about the possibility of sexual contact being played out on stage. Although employed with an element of humour, the words 'disgust' and 'hideous' are both used, with the group consensus being that they were glad the play had not pushed in that direction:

Richard – I think it was quite good they didn't do that, I think that's pretty ... You can allude to that you don't need to show

[...]

Edward – It was just the thought of it, it might happen, was far worse. My imagination is far more horrible than anything they could have put on stage

With the actor and character rendered indistinguishable, and physical presence and age very much ‘believable’, such stage action would clearly have been all too real for the speakers. Because of the indisputable reality and ages of the performers, the imagined action (if performed) would have been ‘real’, however bad (and thereby unbelievable) the performance might have been. The linguistic representation of live performance in the borrowed terminology of ‘believable’ inevitably fails because, as this discussion reveals, it inadequately expresses the multi-layered experience of other human beings that is the result of liveness.

(d) The space and the audience

The group members’ strong reaction to the possibility of sexual contact in the performance, and to Olga herself, was produced by elements resulting from presence and liveness. This is already in evidence in the extracted passages above, but becomes clearer when the conversation turns to talk about the theatre space and the audience.

One of the passages above contains the line ‘The actress is an old woman. The audience is full of old ladies.’ The smallness of the Traverse Two space, the particularities of the seating with the audience always partly lit, and the age of my respondents no doubt encouraged awareness not only of McCallum’s living presence in the room but also alertness to other audience members. Joining and enhancing consciousness of McCallum’s real age was awareness of the presence in the audience of other old ladies. In this extract the group talk about the venue, where only one of them had been before:

Edward – I thought it was really nice actually. Having just that...

Natalie – Very cosy, intimate (Jennifer: Very intimate). And I like seeing the audience, being able to watch everyone else in the audience at the same time.

Elaine – I found myself doing that with some of the references to old people and memory (Edward: Suddenly you thought; Jennifer: oh yeah; Natalie: All the oldies in the front row) and seeing how they reacted to that because they must have had a different perspective on it.

Such mindfulness of the presence of the audience matches Sartre's observations about how individuals in a theatre consciously think about what their neighbours are thinking, at the same time as constructing their own opinions about the performance. The eye-to-eye and thigh-to-thigh contact that the Traverse Two enforces makes physical and mental awareness of your neighbours inevitable, and the importance of audience co-presence discussed in the previous chapter is displayed in this experience of an actual performance. This intersubjective relationship spun an intriguing net of age and generational tension within the audience and between the audience and the stage.

What is clear, as a result, is that the one-dimensional idea of the audience as a single 'community' is flawed. As is suggested here, the actual relationship is a more complex blend of difference and sameness. Another exchange from the second group is worth looking at on this point:

Marina – I really liked the audience. The whole front row was really adorable.

Sarah – The audience was really clever too.

Marina – They were all little old ladies.

Sarah – And the audience was really into it too, I mean they all really laughed when they were supposed to laugh (Marina: Yeah they loved it). No one laughed when they weren't supposed to laugh.

[...]

Sarah – The audience really gave the energy back, it was a really good audience. I really like it, I think the space, I thought the space was really clever.

What is interesting about this exchange – alongside the description of audience ‘energy’ – is how the speakers denote the audience as ‘they’, as *other* to the speaker. Perhaps this is in part a response to the distinct awareness of the older members of the audience, a ‘they’ as opposed to the younger speaker’s ‘I’. (The speakers attended the performance on a night when there were indeed a number of ‘old ladies’ in the audience, although in no sense did they constitute a majority amongst the wide range of ages represented.) Additionally, one of the speakers consistently refers to the audience as another, as ‘they’, as ‘the audience’, and at one point (slightly condescendingly) praising the audience for really being into it. This visioning of one’s self as detached from the audience – ‘I’ and ‘they’ not ‘we’ – runs counter to some of the aspects the other group discussed and also against much performance theory that describes the audience as a unified community. It would be worth exploring this with further research, but I suggest it displays a continued envisioning of an individual consciousness (‘I’) alongside a collective audience (the ‘they’) which only occasionally becomes whole (‘us’). In other words, the imagining of an entity ‘the audience’ from which individual audience members see themselves as distinct but not entirely separate. Difference and sameness are emphasised in the heightened space of a theatre, demonstrating in practice the phenomenological *thereness-for-me* of others.

(e) Liveness

Towards the end of their discussion, the first group moved from talking about the audience to more general conversation about theatre and, in particular, the relationship between theatre and film. With one exception, the group members all felt much more at home in the cinema, attending far more films than plays. The explicit discussion of ‘theatre’ to some extent diverted from my intention of listening to audience members talking about an actual performance. However, the discussion does echo some aspects of the live-performance talk presented in arts market research and many of the descriptions of liveness examined in Chapter One, and in

such replication is very revealing. To counter my earlier criticism of market research for abstracting respondents' statements, I provide two longish extracts here:

Jennifer – I kept wondering if, we were sitting over on the [stage right] and I was wondering if you had a different experience and see a different play if you were sitting centre front (Natalie: Yeah). Because you would feel a lot more, I would think, a lot more invested in what was going on if you were actually almost in it.

Edward – There was definitely, there wasn't... Instead of having that kind of binary relationship between audience somewhere else and stage there was kind of, you saw a lot of the audience and you were aware that a lot of the audience was seeing it from a very different way than you were. I really liked that.

Natalie – It was nice being. We were in the front row and we were right on the stage. And right in there.

Richard – We were right at the back (Natalie: totally different). Heckling [not literally].

Chair – What do you mean by the word intimacy?

Natalie – Just being so close, I guess just being so close and not having any barriers between you and what's going on because we were just right there. I had to keep moving my legs out of the way as they walked passed (Elaine: Yeah).

Jennifer – And even to get to your seat you had to walk across the stage

Natalie – That was weird.

In this exchange, the group's conversation covers many aspects that form the key definitions of theatre (and of liveness) explored in Chapter One. The group discuss the proximity of the actors, the sense of immediacy, the possibility of something going wrong, awareness of other audience members, a sense that other people are having a different experience with a different perspective, the sense that it is a one-off event never to be repeated, and a feeling of community with other audience members. Some of the comments ('you feel part of it') could have been drawn directly from market research findings or promotional campaigns. Inevitably, not all group members agreed on all the points. For example, one respondent was very aware of the possibility of things going wrong, but did not like it. Other group

members suggested that the sense of knowing the audience during *Olga* was in part due to the intimacy of this particular theatre, and would not be the same at large proscenium arch venues. Often speakers described a sensation without the ability to really explain or justify it. Clearly, however, these exchanges constitute live performance as a special kind of performance, experientially distinct from non-live performance. As a final example of the group conversation, I have extracted the last exchanges on this point. Here, the group discusses the relationship between film and theatre, their points suggesting possible answers to some of the questions I posed earlier. The final two contributions are particularly interesting:

Richard – With a film it's been finished and filmed months before it's been presented to you and it's presented to you as a finished piece. Whereas in the theatre you are watching it, you are watching them act and your watching it evolve in front of you so you're really important to them, to keep them. If you don't clap at one point (Natalie: Yeah) it will disrupt the performance. Whereas in a film if everyone stood-up and went out it would carry on. So in that respect you are part of the whole spectacle, so you and the rest of the audience are obviously very important, more so than in a film.

Jennifer – And do you think that people who are in the audience feel that?

Edward/Richard – Yeah I think so.

Jennifer – I mean is that part of the whole theatre experience. That you go, and you and the rest of the audience are part of what is going on on-stage. (Richard: Yes)

Edward – There is that kind of nervy feel to a theatre audience, where like you said there is a possibility of a failure (Jennifer: Umm). Someone might lose a line or drop a prop. And that possibility of a failure is dependent on the audience performance as much as it is on the actor's performance.

Chair – Did you as a virtual first time theatre go-er feel that?

Jennifer – I don't know if I felt *that*, but I did feel that (pause). When I leave a movie I don't really feel that I *know* anybody that's been in that theatre with me, but I kind of got the sense on leaving the theatre that there was some kind of,

maybe superficial or innerficial [unclear], cohesion that went on in the audience. That it was a group of people leaving rather than just singletons wandering out. Edward – No one will ever see that particular production of *Olga* (Jennifer: Right, right) ever again. And we're the only people that actually saw that... (Jennifer: Yeah) People talk about particular productions, or particular recital of some violin concerto or whatever, but there is something individual about live performance that you don't get on film I think.

This exchange demonstrates some possible distinctions between cinema and theatre audiences, suggesting that my earlier descriptions of group dynamics could indeed hold greater weight for live than non-live audiences. The language employed also demonstrates the difficulty of matching experience to expression. The tentative movement towards expression is there in the phrase 'I don't know if I felt that, but I did feel that'. The definitive constitution of the experience in the conclusion: 'that was a group of people leaving rather than just singletons wandering out.' The exchange also reiterates liveness in all its spatial and temporal uniqueness; the expressions echo previously examined theoretical definitions and promotional slogans but are unquestionably formulated in the language and mind of the speakers. Very evident in the exchange are perceptions of creative presence, the active awareness of performative risk, and the constitution of live theatre as the experience of these elements. (The liveness of theatre is clearly recognised and appreciated yet only one of my respondents regularly attended theatre performances. While respondents did attend other live events, this does present an interesting contradiction.)

Looking at the material resulting from the group discussion it is possible to see how the experience of liveness is rendered meaningful by the process of putting that experience into language. Indeed, in the last extracts, it is clear how the process of articulation constitutes the experience itself; crucially, this is something drawn from their own experiences, expressed in their own language, and not the result of an abstracted construction. The conversations of these speakers reveal that they valued the performance of *Olga* as an experience in a unique time and space – as a live

experience. Recognition of the live experience is unconsciously embedded in the desire to share recollections, implicit in responses to the present human performers, and explicitly stated in discussion of the relationship between film and theatre. Their language constitutes a shared appreciation of the experience of the performance as live. On occasions, however, their language also demonstrates an inarticulacy about live performance and hesitancy over how to respond to liveness in language. At times, this results in the employment of the language of realism, and perhaps specifically the borrowing of language and responses from dominant non-live media. If the experience of live performance as live performance is to be reflected, protected, and celebrated then it needs to be inscribed as such in our discourses – I consider the possibilities for achieving this in various representing media in the following chapters.

Research for the future

It is necessary to highlight again that this demonstration exercise had only seven participants; from such a small sample, no statements of widespread application are possible. However, the findings are still significant, gathering additional validity through relation to the findings of the arts market research reports examined in this chapter, and the theoretical discourses of live performance and audience experience examined in Chapter One. Such replication is something David Silverman stresses as vital in assessing the validity and reliability of qualitative research (Silverman 1993:144-170). Small numbers are also not necessarily a problem, particularly in the detailed process of discourse analysis. Keith Harris' research only considered the responses of four interviewees, and while acknowledging the resulting lack of quantitative authority he suggests that the theoretical insights and transferable potential remain noteworthy (Harris 1997:9).

In terms of the recollection of the group experience, the expression of assessments on a scale resting somewhere between believable and realistic, and awareness of audience and performer presence, this demonstration exercise usefully adds to the

exploration of liveness. The research also automatically makes demands for some research for the future. To which end I have matched the points raised as a result of my exercise to four distinct projects, very briefly suggesting how this kind of research could be extended.

Audiences 1: What is the subtle 'I', 'we', and 'they' relationship held between and within the audience? While the idea of a single and stable community is clearly too one-dimensional, individual audience members do have a significant alertness to the presence of other audience members. Is this awareness grounded in a sense of 'them' as a community as opposed to 'I', or a fluid relationship depending on context and situation? Further research could try to replicate this element, particularly by employing discussion groups of mixed ages and social orientations.

Audiences 2: How significant is the desire I noted to affirm memory? This requires repeating on a larger scale, with more attention paid to the disturbances caused by mis-matched memory and the pleasure in joint recollection. Further discussion groups across a range of live-performance forms could test this question further. Related to this is the question of memory and the need to talk about the performance: how important is performance talk to affirming and confirming memory?

The Vocabulary of Realism: How significant is the grounding of evaluative judgements in the language of realism? Is the scale I described between believable and unbelievable only borrowing the vocabulary of realism, or does it inevitably lead to the making of judgements on such a scale? It is also possible that the language employed in my discussion groups was partly determined by their age.

Actors: While my findings did provide evidence for the familiar emphasis placed by live-performance commentators upon the presence of the performers, I do not think I really identified how this presence is manifested in language. Perhaps more direct questioning, one-on-one interviews, or a participatory approach and methodology could push this issue further.

These four research suggestions indicate both the successful outcomes of this research exercise and its flaws and omissions. Some of the conclusions, additionally, can be drawn back into my larger analysis of spoken performance discourses. First, the urgency to talk about and externalise the experience of live performance; second, wider points about the shared vocabulary of liveness.

Part Five: Talking Performance

(a) Urgency to Talk

Spoken discourses about art, such as the ones I have been exploring, can be seen as fundamental to the very experience of art. There is often a powerful need to talk about the experience of an artistic event, a sense that art needs to be interpreted, discussed, and re-communicated subsequent to its experience in order to complete the experience. While an individual's response to art is personal, and therefore private, there is subsequently a willingness to verbalise that experience. This verbalisation can be seen as serving a number of different purposes: to reach a personal comprehension of an experience; to test or modify that response and learn about others' interpretations; to share emotional responses with others. As literary critic Norman Holland notes about the need for communication about literature: we want more than the personal experience, we also want peers (Holland 1981:242-251).

With arts experienced in a social setting, particularly with a temporally unified audience, I would suggest that all these elements are intensified, leading to an even greater need to externalise the experience. The intersubjective relationships between the audience no doubt also play a part, as demonstrated by the audience for *Olga*: 'each member of an audience asks himself what he thinks of a play and at the same time what his neighbour is thinking' (Sartre 1976:67). There are two points worth underlining in this description of theatre audiences. First, the audience members ask themselves what they are thinking: the performance is there to be experienced, to be responded to, and to be thought about. Like all art it is an event that focuses attention, which underlines its own significances. It is not usual to ask oneself what

one thinks about the experience of walking down the street – which is not presented to one as a potential experience of significance – but that question is instinctive in relation to art as its presentational aspect is always conspicuous. The second point is that the audience members then ask what their neighbours are thinking: something explicitly demonstrated in relation to *Olga*. Live performance is a social event, resulting not just in an individual's awareness of others, but also in the awareness of the personal responses of others. The strong community aspect of live performance results in an even greater urgency to share responses, to verbalise the experience of a public event.

The status of live performance as a social event, its presentational nature, and the resulting necessity to exchange and articulate the experience are demonstrated in expressions of the need to talk about performances that frequently occur in audience research. For example, the perception that there is an obligation to talk about live performance is an aspect expressed negatively by the young irregular or non-attending respondents to one piece of research:

You're expected to come out with an opinion about it ... I don't like that ... it's high art ... you can't just say 'I don't like that'.

You have to do a literary criticism each time you go. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:12)

In contrast, amongst more regular attenders these same aspects are seen positively:

Sometimes I've been to concerts where the interval, discussing the music, is as interesting as the concert.

Quite often it's a social occasion. You're with friends and you can discuss it afterwards. (Unit 2 1983:28)

However, the motivation to talk about performance clearly is not universal. The *My Music* project presents one angry response to the enquiry asking what she feels about music, the passionate rejection of the request to talk perhaps inspired by a perception of the inevitable inadequacy of any talk:

But I feel no ... I mean, I feel somewhat of a ... maybe I just want to enjoy it, I don't want to explain it. I don't want to start describing 'what' and 'why'. I just like it and like to hear it ... I like to be moved by it. I feel no need to explain it ... you can't explain why. (Crafts, Cavicchi and Keil 1993:97)

One of the few instructions I provided before the *Olga* discussions was an injunction to the participants not to talk to each other about the performance. Following up on this, I asked in the discussions how they had found this experience. All the participants indicated that it had been problematic, had felt odd, or was otherwise difficult. I also asked about this aspect in the questionnaire. All the respondents declared that they 'always' or 'usually' talked about a performance afterwards. When asked why this was they replied:

Edward: Enjoy hearing other perspectives, working out problems etc.

Elaine: Go with friends as it's a good way to meet up with people and see a play at the same time. Discuss performance for clarification of things I didn't understand and to get someone else's reaction – can give you new understandings of play.

Jennifer: Often I meet to discuss the themes to achieve a greater understanding. To fill in the gaps of something you missed.

Marina: Curiosity and keen that we should all hear each other's views because it can double the memories.

Natalie: I'd just feel silly if I went to the theatre alone, altho' many do, and there shouldn't be a stigma attached to it – doing most things alone basically make it look like you've got no friends – when that's a rather juvenile way of looking at it. But, also, it's great to have someone to discuss things with, and ask questions, and express to how much you loved or hated something.

Richard: It is part of the overall enjoyment of the theatre to discuss it afterwards – this is also true of film though I feel the theatre offers more scope for different interpretations therefore making the discussion afterwards more interesting.

Sarah: I don't know – I enjoy discussing things I've seen, but I'm not sure why exactly.

There is evidently a social aspect to going to and talking about live performance with friends; but the difficulties the participants expressed as a result of having actively not to talk about the performance suggests more than this. Sarah, who in the questionnaire response seems uncertain as to why she discusses performances at all, provided a long anecdote in the discussion about how difficult she had found it not to. The questionnaire responses above indicate concern over responses, understandings, and interpretations of the performance, all leading to an overarching question: 'What was it we just saw?' Upon leaving any event conversation represents the only method of immediately gaining access to something outside of one's individual memory, and therefore is the only method of affirming memory. Dance reviewer Deborah Jowitt links this to the transience of live performance, writing that 'people like to talk about dances afterwards in order to prolong their (the dances') ephemeral existence' (Jowitt 1977:101). There is, I think, an urgency to talk about live performance that is grounded, from the evidence of the above replies and the conversational exchanges presented earlier, in the need to affirm one's memory of the event. In Chapter Three I examine how this urgency to talk is reflected, with similar motivations, in the often-expressed urgency to 'save' live performance from disappearance.

If this experience of talking about a performance after the event is a common one, it can also be described as a frustrating one, often beginning with the familiar opening remarks: 'what did you think?' or 'did you enjoy it?' The difficulties the discussion-group participants had in discussing the actors' performances and their resort to clichés and commonplaces demonstrates the frustrations of talking about live performance. At a basic level, the frustration is fairly straightforward: having in theory shared an experience, why is it not possible to re-share that experience in language? Once more, it is essential that any vocabulary for the expression of experiences must be shared. Because of this, awareness of the difficulties of externalising an experience often tempers the willingness to doing so. Certainly, the feeling of inadequacy that I personally perceive about many post-performance representations was one of the main inspirations I had for embarking on this thesis.

(b) The Vocabulary of Liveness

There has not yet been adequate research into how people talk about their experiences of live performance. However, material uncovered and created in this chapter does represent a window into talk as a contemporary discourse representing liveness. In looking at and across these explicit valuations it is possible to identify a discourse covering and representing the interests, ideas, and languages of a wide spectrum of parties concerned and involved with live performance. What is significant is the extent to which these discourses demonstrates a shared vocabulary of liveness, particularly on the level of explicit valuations of live performance. In the demonstration-exercise questionnaire, I asked the participants to list three words that they most immediately associated with theatre. Of the 21 words returned, the replies can be divided into those to do with performance (13), those to do with drama (5), and those to do with the social event (3). The words to do with the live performance match against some of the key words I have identified in other live-performance discourses. The 13 performance related words were:

Live (x3), Unique, Vibrant, Immediate, Intimacy, Audience (x2), Nervous, Thrill, Performance, Immediacy

I then asked the respondents to indicate their favourite and least favourite things about theatre. The positive responses can again be divided up between comments on the social event ('dressing up a bit smart', 'the "treat" aspect'), on drama ('exploration of themes', 'emotional catalyst'), and on performance ('Every performance unique, proximity to action, possibility of failure'). Given the age of my respondents, it is interesting to compare their responses with those of a market research investigation into the attitudes of young people to the theatre. There are several similarities: film consistently being seen as more accessible, relaxing, fun, and mainstream; theatre as being more serious, rigorous, and demanding (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990). This comparison of research-projects looking at the attitudes of 'young people' displays how the statistical aspects of audience research participants – age, sex, and social background – can importantly describe the 'tribe' of the respondents, possibly determining attitudes and certainly determining language. Yet even beyond such social divisions the extent of the shared vocabulary is noticeable.

Drawing on explicit and implicit articulations of liveness presented in this chapter, it is possible to pull out three main perceptions of live performance constituted in language. Both the subject and the vocabulary patterns surrounding them define these areas as 'occasion', 'time', and 'space'. First, as I have discussed, is the explicit use of words and imagery connected to the valuation of live performance as special: as an 'occasion'. As an important starting place, the idea of the occasion represents the explicit and conscious understanding that there *is* such a thing as 'live' performance. Following this, it is possible to divide discussion into valuation of liveness in time and space. Around these general ideas exists an established and widely shared and understood vocabulary of imagery and expression:

Occasion – special, treat, unique, spectacle, thrill, event

Time – now, moment, unique, happening, change

Space – there, part of it, atmosphere, response/respond, communication, radiation

In many ways, this vocabulary directly parallels the explicit discourses of liveness found in performance theory and in arts marketing. Moreover, the words favoured by the performance theorists and the advertising copywriters can be added to the list of vocabulary:

Time – disappearance, transience, ephemeral, presence, only once, absence, trace, processual, for one evening/night, dynamic, comes alive, never forget

Space – presence, community, on stage, for you, appearing, privilege

This shared vocabulary constitutes an identifiable body of consensus across these various discourses regarding live performance's liveness. This position is explicitly established in these discourses and presents both a method of describing live performance and a way of articulating what is valuable about it. Demonstrated here again is how the concept of unique time and space is central to a general conception of live performance, with the vocabulary or method of representing liveness rendering these experiences meaningful. Significantly I have described this as something both drawn from and also defining experience, but not as something entirely constructing or creating the concept of live performance from nothing. Live-performance talk, therefore, is a discourse representing liveness: a discourse that demonstrates how live performance is constituted for those that experience it, and is consequently a window onto 'what' liveness is.

Chapter Three: Representing Liveness

Part One: The Urge to Document Live Performance

Ephemerality and Retention

If live performance is defined by its 'liveness', then it is also defined in by its disappearance. Chapter One detailed the recurring imagery of disappearance, absence, loss, and memory that circulates through discourses of live performance. Chapter Two suggested that such discourses constitute and perhaps bring into being the cultural perception of their subject. Bringing these two points together, it is possible to see how discourses about live performance constitute it as existing in circumscribed time and place, present only for the moment and then gone. What is valued as 'live' is valued for the transient moment of its creation. Logically, therefore, that performance disappears must also be positively valued. Peggy Phelan's statement that performance 'becomes itself through disappearance' shows how this valuation can become an ontological definition of liveness, while the remarks of Jean Genet on the future life of a theatre production illustrate the acceptance and positive appreciation of disappearance in practice:

It will not be possible for all the living, the dead, and the future generations to see *Les Paravents* [...] All the stage performances which will follow the first five ones will only be mere reflections. That's what I think will happen. But anyway, who cares? One well-rehearsed performance should be enough. (Kalisz 1988:79)

The positive value placed on the unique moment of performance celebrates liveness as ephemerality. As Genet asks: why should anything more be necessary? Similarly, theatre practitioner Eugenio Barba declares theatre the 'art of the present' and describes directors and performers as creators of 'ephemeral works' who must always be working in the present (Barba 1992:77). Artists, like Barba and Genet,

who celebrate the transitory nature of their work often repeat this primary valuation of liveness. George Balanchine, for example, was (according to his associate Barbara Horgan) 'a man who didn't give a damn about the past and cared even less about the future', clearly sharing this commitment to working in the present moment of each performance (Brooks 2001b:www).

However, while Balanchine may not have been interested in the future life of his work, dance scholar Bonnie Brooks observes with evident relief that others certainly were. Brooks suggests that 'An examination of practices in the dance field shows that the work of saving dances often appears to fall not to the artists themselves, but to the people who surround them' (Brooks 2001b:www). The work of 'saving' dances is, of course, one of saving them from disappearance and these comments and documentary ambitions are repeated across the performing arts. Already, therefore, we are a big ideological step away from Genet's declaration that one performance should be enough, and far away from any positive valuation of disappearance.

The desire to document performance is a strong, contradictory thread running through the live arts. It is a desire motivated by an awareness of the inevitable disappearance of live performance, seen as something negative and not as a cause for celebration, and witnessed in the comments of one anonymous Edinburgh Festival Fringe theatre director:

In five weeks what will be left of [my play]? A script, a press release, a couple of photos, and the reviews. (Shrum Jnr 1996:11)

What is worrying this director is the imminent disappearance of his or her production, the passing of an ephemeral event and the fear that any record will be mere residue and inadequate remembrance. This expression of concern by the director is unreflective; the obvious question as to why we might desire retention is seldom asked. This is perhaps because the answer is so obvious. Indeed, an answer is already present in the original statement by the director: if we do not document performance it disappears; we want to document performance to stop it disappearing.

Those wanting to save performance deem such an end a good thing in its own right, with any subsequent equivocations or motivations being merely addenda. Fears such as these have long sparked a practical, social, and academic urge to 'save' live performance from disappearance.

The fact that live performance *is* live motivates this instinct to documentation. As Ben Jonson writes in his preface to the publication of *The Masque of Blackness* in 1608, his script exists because the performance could not last:

The honor and splendour of these spectacles was such in the performance as, could these hours have lasted, this of mine now had been an unprofitable work.
(Jonson 1969:47)

The underlying motivation for the representation of live performance is always the same, the statement of that motivation – 'Could these hours have lasted' – providing an apt motif for this thesis. Unable to hold live performance continually in the present, it must be translated into some more enduring if less splendid form: it must be represented. And Jonson's preface continues, adding that his work in publication intends to 'redeem' his work in performance from the common 'evil' of 'oblivion'.

Oddly, the desire to save live performance from disappearance is not held as incompatible with the valuation of performance as ephemeral. For example, Australian performance theorist Gay McAuley not only echoes Brooks' sentiments about the need to save performances, but also describes artists as always more interested in the present than the past or future and details the need to persuade sometimes sceptical practitioners to take responsibility for their 'legacy'. At the same time, however, she also borrows directly some of Barba's language of the value of transience. 'Theatre, by its nature,' writes McAuley:

is an art of the present moment, and the theatre artists focus their energies on the present of the lived experience. Performance is unrepeatable and is fascinating to performers and audiences precisely because it is unique and ephemeral. [...]

While some individuals may feel anguish at the lack of more durable traces of these experiences, most theatre artists are more interested in their next show than putting resources into documenting the one that has just closed. (McAuley 1994:184)

The shift that McAuley operates here – from the positive valuation of disappearance as central to performance to the subject of documentation – is fascinating, and a movement that quickly becomes familiar when reading around discourses of transience. It is present, for instance, in the contradiction that dance reviewer Marcia Siegel notes when she describes ‘the critic’s paradoxical passion to want to capture the moment and simultaneously let it go’ (Siegel 1991:xvi). Similarly, Michael Kirby, in his preface to *The New Theatre: Performance Documentation*, first defines live performance by transience and then declares the importance of halting disappearance. For Kirby: ‘The need for performance documentation lies in the nature of theatre itself. Unlike the other arts, performance is perishable’ (Kirby 1974b:i). Once more, disappearance and documentation seem to go hand in hand.

It is possible that the positive valuation and practical acceptance of the disappearance of live performance continues to be upheld by artists creating performances – although, as Jonson and the anonymous Fringe director demonstrate, this is not universal. Audiences too are perhaps used to this fact – although again this is not always the situation, as some of the examples in the previous chapter suggest. However, as Canadian theatre researcher Rodrigues Villeneuve asserts, ‘the same is not true for journalists, scholars, or historians, who must speak about the performance. They all want to retain something of it. Something material, some tangible trace’ (Villeneuve 1990:32). It is certainly in the writings and articulations of such people that the urge to document performance is strongest. In discourses about live performance, ideas of disappearance and transience mark one set of recurring imagery (as demonstrated in Chapter One), but they are accompanied by a mirroring, complementary, and contradictory ‘discourse of documentation’. It is this discourse that will be examined here: looking at the imagery, metaphors, and constructions that circulate through discussions of live-performance retrieval and

retention. The expression of the need to save live performance expresses an urgency to document that replicates in many ways the urgency for audience talk examined in Chapter Two. The expression of documentary urgency is, additionally, a significant discourse of live performance, which appears to challenge, but in fact reaffirms the cultural constitution and valuation of liveness and (ultimately) disappearance.

The fear that live performance disappears if active steps are not taken to document it in some fashion is more than the metaphorical fancy of performance theorists. It is a fear most immediately realised in dance, where history shows that the failure to document performances leads directly to the erasure of dance itself. As dance scholar Fernau Hall observes, 'To anyone approaching the study of ballet with knowledge of other arts, what stands out most clearly is the poverty of its traditions' (Hall 1983:390). Fragments, scenes, and rumours of ballets exist – along with titles, names of choreographers and dancers, and the music – but Hall is only able to list a very small number of complete ballets that survive from before the twentieth century. The dances not documented disappeared: they needed saving from the evil of oblivion.

The urge, therefore, is to document to halt disappearance, a desire echoed powerfully by those – especially journalists, academics, and historians – working beyond the immediate production of performances. An example of such practice is Geraldine Cousin's book, *Recording Women: A Documentation of Six Theatre Productions*, which sets out to record live-performance events otherwise 'subject to erasure'. The belief that the work she is documenting, being by women, is particularly subject to neglect and oblivion partly motivates Cousin. As she notes in her introduction, she records because of a fear that the productions would otherwise 'soon be forgotten'. Her documentary ambition has, therefore, a historical and social impulse not directly related to the works' status as live performances. However, as with dance, the liveness of the performances prescribes erasure into their very creation: whatever their origin or subject matter they disappear unless actively represented. This instinctive determination to document because the works are live performances is strongly evident in Cousin's expression of intent.

My aim throughout has been to preserve what could be preserved in book form of these six theatrical events – to provide traces, at least, of powerful, moving and, at times, very funny experiences. There is an anomaly in this, of course. Theatre (as I have already noted) is ephemeral. Play texts, reviews, photographs etc., survive, but the performances themselves are over; they had existence only in the present moment of theatre. One of the roles of the theatre academic however is, I think, to bear witness to what has been, and this is what I have tried to do. (Cousin 2000:3)

Cousin, therefore, continues and accepts the description of live performance as ephemeral: her expression of theatre's disappearance in the moment of its creation echoes the observations quoted throughout this thesis. The crucial element, however, is that the positive appreciation of presentness is not matched by a positive valuation of disappearance. Instead, as is demonstrated by the value loaded language she employs, for Cousin the documentation of performance is quasi-moral endeavour, the action being its own reward as a good thing in its own right. The evident tension between the valuation of presentness and the desire for retention through documentation is unexplained. Again these two elements – documentation and disappearance – are tied together in a prominently repeated double bind.

Other questions also leap out unanswered from Cousin's statement of intent, particularly the attention she pays to her role as an 'academic' and the note that she is preserving what can be retained 'in book form'. Unstated here is the unconscious acceptance of the book and scholarship as the right and proper place for such things to exist. Indeed, Cousin's work is part of a prominent and widely echoed scholarly discourse that articulates the desire to produce and publish documentations of live performance, thereby introducing it into critical exchange. In this discourse of documentation, expressions of self-validation and the value of existence in publication soon become familiar, as, for example, in Glasgow-based researcher Greg Giesekam's account of Clanjamfrie's *The World's Edge*:

While it may be like looking at a snake's old skin after it has sloughed it off and moved on, we should recognise that the dearth of descriptive accounts contributes

to the erasure of such approaches to performance from most published treatment of recent British theatre. (Gieseckam 1994:115)

Gieseckam, like Cousin, acknowledges the disappointments with documentations but operates the same valuation of the published over the unwritten and the studied over the unstudied. Once more, all that is stated is that 'we' must document because, if we do not, a performance cannot continue to exist. Both Cousin's and Gieseckam's assumption is that to exist in publication is to escape erasure, presented as an end worth struggling for in itself. Further, existence in scholarly exchange is implicitly defined as a positive status that establishes the value of its subject as a direct result of its existence. This assumption is made explicit by Australian archivist Michelle Potter, for whom the desire to document dance is grounded in the fear that 'without efforts to preserve the history and heritage of the art form it will forever languish as trivial and not worthy of serious research' (M. Potter 2001:www). Even more unequivocally, performance theorists Denise Varney and Rachel Fensham declare that live performance must be documented to ensure that it 'is included in contemporary critical discourse', as otherwise it 'will become increasingly absent from critical theory' (Varney and Fensham 2000:96).

Discussing this attitude to the 'existence' of performance history only in publication, theatre producer and researcher Anna Cutler describes the privileging of what she calls 'Proper Documentation':

defined here as the material related to a performance which is signified by the written word and made available through publication. (Cutler 1998:112)

Such documentation, Cutler declares, attempts to claim the status that 'if it's not printed, it doesn't exist', which she sees as resulting in the neglect of work outside of scholarly exchange. It is certainly possible to argue that live performance does not *continue* to exist if not represented in some form: the disappearance of dance performances is testimony to this. At the same time, however, live performance does have an existence outside of any 'proper documentation' and, additionally, it must be

recognised that the mode of the existence of performance is radically altered as a result of any representation. Careful reflection is therefore required concerning what any documentation records and how it represents the absent performance. Without such reflection, as demonstrated at the extremes of this documentary fervour, it can begin to appear that the representation runs the risk of becoming valued above the live experience, with existence in cultural discourses considered so important to be worth any relative devaluation of the original experience that may result.

In contrast to Cutler's self-reflection on the role of 'the academy' in the posterior existence of live performance, most commentators do not consider for long the implications of their instinct to record through publication and documentation. There seems to be little examination of the purposes and motivations of documentation; instead, we simply document because if we do not live performance disappears. And perhaps, as theatre director Elizabeth LeCompte intriguingly declares, the result is 'a time when duplication and preservation have risen to art forms in themselves' (LeCompte 1981:50). Certainly, the development of structures, theories, and techniques of documentation (as will be examined later in relation to different media of performance representation) supports LeCompte's assessment. Additionally, these expressions of the urgency to document all return attention (if sometimes unconsciously) to the status of representations as the trace of the disappeared live performance. As I will discuss now, the very urgency and instinctiveness of these calls for documentation reaffirms the constitution of liveness as ephemeral.

Documenting the Ephemeral

It becomes clear, then, that tensions and contradictions permeate this entire issue. Existence *only* in the here and now, ephemerality, is the very thing valued about live performance. (At the same time as demonstrating the reflex to document, almost all the commentators cited above use ideas of transience to define live performance.) However, since documentation compromises the existence of performance *only* in the here and now, surely such documentation and the positive valuation of it erode

the carefully constructed definition of liveness. Patrice Pavis elucidates this problem, suggesting that 'we always have an uneasy conscience when notating the theatre, as though we were carrying out a forbidden act which makes the very object supposed to be re-presented, disappear' (Pavis 1982:129). Although none of the commentators examined above explicitly demonstrate this uneasy conscience (except perhaps McAuley), Pavis' observation is still valid. If what is essentially valuable about live performance is its liveness, manifested in its disappearance, then does documentation negate what was essentially valuable about performance?

To expand on this point, it is worth making a comparison with Walter Benjamin's concept of 'aura', briefly examined in Chapter One. Benjamin describes 'aura' as the quality perceived in a work of art established by its distance and uniqueness; he contrasts the limited and exclusive audience of a non-mechanically reproduced work of art with the potentially limitless audience of the mechanically reproduced work (Benjamin 1970:211-244). Erosion of distance, Benjamin declares, erodes the 'aura' of art. In discourses about live performance, the idea of 'disappearance' directly parallels that of 'distance', with the valuation 'live' (standing in for 'aura') seen as a function of 'disappearance'. Therefore, any eroding of disappearance erodes the 'live'. The comparison is clear in Genet's statement of the limited audience of a theatre production: 'It will not be possible for all the living, the dead, and the future generations to see *Les Paravents*'. These ideas are repeated again, once more echoing Benjamin, in Phelan's declaration that 'Performance honors the idea that a limited number of people in a specific time/space frame can have an experience of value which leaves no visible trace afterwards' (Phelan 1993:149). However, just as it is possible to argue that mechanical reproduction has enhanced perceptions of aura in manually produced works, so it would be a mistake to believe that documentation negates liveness. Instead, it is possible that some degree of retention heightens perceptions of ephemerality; the two certainly are not exclusive.

Throughout, this discussion continually presents the temptation of slipping towards what might be a false antithesis. Pavis declares that documentation negates an important aspect of live theatre as live performance; Phelan argues that the extent to

which a performance exists in the circulation of representations and reproductions then it ceases to be performance. Here, these discourses of liveness seem to present documentation and disappearance as exclusive antithesis. But documentation does not hinder the disappearance of live performance. Documents clearly record and therefore retain something, but they are not the live performance. No matter how scholars and historians record or document live performance, it remains transient: it still disappears. Similarly, is it not possible that live performance can be experienced as live, as transient, and at the same time be documented? (Although it is difficult to accept the simultaneous valuation of these two contradictory elements, analogies in other circumstances are possible. For example, social rites of passage, including weddings, are unrepeatable one-off events celebrated as such at the same time as conscious effort is made to record them. In a sense, these are occasions when we relish the moment but keep the video running.) That the document is not the performance is certainly the case; is the paradox rather that a documented live performance remains transient? Discourses examined in Chapter One present live performance as unrepeatable at the same time as it evidently *is* repeated: a paradox that McAuley echoes at the same time as calling for improved documentary techniques (McAuley 1994:184). Audience talk, examined in Chapter Two, uses group expressions of support and remembrance in the attempt to retain and reaffirm the memory of a transient experience: retention and disappearance once more mutually entwined. Similar complex relationships also exist between the live performance and its representations.

In this context, the issue is whether even limited and imperfect documentation does not open the live event up to other times, other spaces, and limitless numbers of people. The *fact* of live performance's disappearance is secure – the document does not halt disappearance – but does documentation begin to make the valuation of ephemerality meaningless? If live performance is performance that disappears, then a live performance that does not entirely disappear is no longer truly live performance. This, of course, is the speculative conclusion that Philip Auslander is pushing for in *Liveness*, when he explodes any simple binary between the live and the non-live. The complex relationship between live and technological performance questions the

notion that any live performance can today exist without documentation, reproduction, and repetition. Ontological formulations of performance may contrast the disappearance of live performance with the automatic reproducibility of technological performance, but Auslander suggests our cultural impulse to replicate and repeat has rendered any such distinction irrelevant (Auslander 1999:50). A supporting point is made by Gay McAuley, who suggests that the comparison of live performance with technological media has been the primary motivating factor in the demand for and interest in performance documentation (McAuley 1986:5). In other words, there was no overriding desire to document live performance before mechanical forms of recording became familiar, as such documentation was impossible. This is an interesting point, which echoes Auslander's suggestion that live performance did not exist as such until the emergence of forms of non-live performance made the definition possible. Theatre historian Laurence Senelick similarly considers whether the desire to record performances was a result of technological developments, or if technology instead enabled the fulfilment of a pre-existing need. His suggestion is that such desire is probably the 'product of mid-nineteenth century positivism' (Senelick 1997:256). While I certainly think that the existence of sophisticated methods of recording increased the urge for documentation, I would suggest that they did not instigate it: Jonson's desire to redeem his plays from oblivion is one prominent pre-mechanical example; the invention of numerous methods of dance and music notation is another.

Taking such arguments further, it is possible to see live performance as defined not by its disappearance but by its inscribed and potential enduring documentations. The perception that live performance disappears is dependent on retention and documentation. Just as many commentators declare that there can be no concept of live without the mediatized, so there can be no concept of ephemerality without documentation. (Feranu Hall, for instance, can only lament the erasure of dance history because some rumours of its splendour survive.) However, the logic here must work both ways: there can be no concept of documentation without a sense of that which is not (or cannot be) documented. A documentation that tells the *whole* story is not a documentation, but the whole story. That which is missing (the

unrepresented, unrepresentable, or liminal) re-inscribes the continuing absence of the ephemeral live performance. The discourse of documentation continually re-inscribes perceptions of ephemerality; the act of documentation marks the fact of disappearance.

The discourse of documentation can be seen as largely circular: live performance disappears and therefore needs documenting. Similarly self-reflective is the fear that the ephemeral must be documented lest it be considered mere ephemera or the suggestion that the media of documentation motivates the very desire to document. It is even possible that the matter of what is documented is circular: if it is important, we must document it; if it is documented, it must be important. Indeed, perhaps the apparently contradictory discourses of disappearance and documentation are inherently interdependent. It is possible that the urgency to document is self-fulfilling and self-perpetuating, with some degree of essential retention prompting the very idea that live performance disappears. Accompanying this idea, however, is a more fundamental fear of disappearance itself.

The discourses surrounding the documentation of live performance demonstrate a concern amongst commentators that if something cannot be touched or measured, examined or judged then it (somewhat paradoxically) both does not exist and worries us. That the undocumented does not exist is evident in the scholarly self-valuation of the studied: the desperation of Cousin, Geisekam, Kirby, Potter, and Varney and Fensham to draw their subject matter into the 'researchable' clearly demonstrates the relation of the unscholarly with the unvaluable. For Hall the missing history of dance – or for Cousin, women's theatre – is unknowable, a vacuum in our knowledge that motivates an evidently moral crusade to save performance from its self-destruction in disappearance. That this is motivated by a fear of disappearance is more speculative but demonstrated in the moral dimension that is present in the language of all these discourses and certainly witnessed in Jonson's evocation of the evil of oblivion.

Also demonstrating the fear of disappearance is the indignant condemnation by some writers of any positive value placed on 'liveness' and its un-documentable

characteristics. Elements that are valued as live, including presence but particularly here disappearance, are things that cannot be measured empirically and as such warrant automatic suspicion. Evidence of this suspicion of non-proper or non-empirical arguments includes the strident rejection by Auslander of all liminal understandings of live performance as being merely mystical, magical clichés (Auslander 1999:2). Elsewhere, Roger Copeland terms the valuation of performance's liveness 'sheer bourgeois sentimentality' (Copeland 1990:42), while Varney and Fensham write of the 'reactionary metaphysics of presence' (Varney and Fensham 2000:96). Documentation firmly places live performance in the realms of the known, the empirical, in the realms of 'serious' consideration; this again is a moral crusade against the irrational or essentialistic and against any belief in the liminal.

By documenting live performance we enable proof, authentication, evidence, examination, and study; we affirm and provide justification for our memories. By documenting performance, we halt – or seek to halt – disappearance and also doubt, uncertainty, instability, multiplicity, ineffability, change, and loss. Documentation establishes – or seeks to establish – a firm grasp upon that which is liminal. Once again, however, the continual pairing of documentation and disappearance, the repeated double bind, always returns attention to the eternal failures of retention. The document does not halt disappearance. The discourse expressing the urgency of documentation, even by those seeking to draw performance into the knowable, always returns to reinstitute the liminal value of liveness. The document makes disappearance manifest in that which is not documented. Documentation and disappearance go hand in hand, each constituting the other, and each re-expressing the valuation of liveness.

Documentations

In *Languages of the Stage*, Patrice Pavis suggests that the basic question to consider in relation to performance documentation is not how to conduct it 'but for what purpose' (Pavis 1982:112). To a degree this is correct, as the envisioned function of

any documentation should determine the nature of the activity. However, in concentrating on rational and deliberate purposes of documentation (such as to enable revivals or aid interpretation), Pavis neglects to consider the more immediate desire simply to halt disappearance, a desire that exists even before such functions become relevant. In practice, in contrast to Pavis' theory, the purpose of any particular documentation is something rarely explored. Geraldine Cousin – to take just one of the examples previously examined – never explicitly discusses why she is documenting performances, beyond the fact that, if she does not, she fears their disappearance. Logically, therefore, the best or most satisfactory documentations would be those that retain to the greatest degree the qualities most valued in the original live performance – what I have termed the 'representation' of performance. If the solution to the problem presented in Jonson's lament 'Could these hours have lasted' is representation in another medium, then the ambition should be to re-communicate as much as possible of the splendour of the original event. That the primary motivation of documentation often does not stretch beyond retention means, therefore, that the purpose of any representation is less significant than the method.

All representations being translations from one medium to another means that any method is fraught with compromise and suspicion: compromise over what is lost and what is recorded, suspicion over whether the documenting medium is serving its subject or its own values and specificity. The act of translation, however, is vital. For, as the commentators considered above insist, live performance is dependent on its representations to exist beyond the moment of its creation and within continued exchanges of ideas; and these traces of live performance can determine the enduring perception of the absent event. Chapter Two examined how audience talk can be analysed as a discourse in which the articulation of the experience of liveness constitutes the shared valuation of that experience. Similarly, all representations of live performance can be considered discourses, governed by the qualities of the medium, by tradition, theory, and practice through which the remembered experience of liveness is made manifest and meaningful. It is therefore useful to apply a visual, verbal, media-specific discourse analysis to a consideration of how these representations constitute liveness.

As a method of exploring representations of live performances, the rest of this chapter will examine four different activities of documentation: archiving, still photography, notation, and video recording. Complementing this chapter, Appendix Three, 'Documents of *India Song*, discusses practical examples of various documentations (still photographs, video, and multi-media) of a single performance. Here, with each different medium or activity, both the theory and practice of representing live performance are described, analysed, and finally evaluated as to their effectiveness in communicating the unique qualities of the live. In each instance, suggestions are also made as to how the activity might best re-constitute the live in its representation of liveness. Considering the translation of ephemeral performance to lasting document, the following pages examine what impressions the representations leave on understandings of live performance and in turn how the nature of liveness determines how we respond to and judge the representations.

Part Two: Archives, the Detritus of Live Performance

(a) The 'Authoritative' Archive

Nowhere in the arts can the desire to simply stop things disappearing – and the feeling that one is able to access the past – be stronger than in the live-performance 'archive'. The archive, defined here as official collections of material relating to dance, music, or theatre, represents the formal collecting, cataloguing, preserving, and consecrating of traces of past performances. These performance archives, huge numbers of which exist in companies and institutions around the world, can consist of almost anything. Archives contain theatre programmes, brochures, leaflets, photographs, videos and sound recordings, press releases and press cuttings, details of marketing strategies, figures of tickets sales, contracts with performers and confidential budgets, correspondence, descriptions of sponsorship arrangements, venue plans, set and costume designs, stage and lighting plans, production notes, annotated scripts, interviews with directors or actors, actual costumes and examples of stage properties, and so on. Anything that is remotely associated with the

performance can belong in an archive, including material detailing the processes of creation, production, and reception. Clearly, the documentary merit of each of these archival traces of performance warrants consideration in its own right. Here, however, I consider the concept of the archive itself, examining how the manifestos of archival institutions and statements of archive theory form a discourse that constitutes a perception and ideology of the archive. In particular, I examine the suggestion presented by this discourse that the archive allows access to an authentic memory of past performances.

The identity of the archive as repository of accuracy and objectivity is one deeply rooted in the heart of repeated articulations about archival activity and the usefulness of collecting and examining historical documents and objects. The mission statements of numerous live-performance archives demonstrate these basic perceptions and expectations. Arts Archive, for example, is 'dedicated to documenting the processes at work within contemporary performing arts practice' (Arts Archive 2001:www); the Live Arts Archive 'continues to document current events as they occur and seeks to make its historical record as complete as possible' (Live Art Archive 2001:www); the Jerome Robbins Dance Division of the New York Public Library describes itself as 'the largest and most comprehensive archive in the world devoted to the documentation of dance' (Jerome Robbins Dance Division 2001:www). Indeed, as the Jerome Robbins Dance Division also observes, those working in dance have an particular fear of the disappearance of live performance, as it is a form traditionally very difficult to document; as a direct result of this perception, many organisations have been established to directly counter the problem of its disappearance. For example, the National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance (NIPAD) was set up in 1993, along with the Dance Heritage Coalition, SAVE AS: DANCE and Preserve Inc, whose slogan is 'assuring dance a life beyond performance' (Preserve Inc 2001:www). These are institutions established with the primary aim, not of facilitating the creation of new art but of ensuring the documentation of existing art: organisations looking to the past and the future rather than the present. The importance placed on documentation by these institutions is clearly defined in the NIPAD's mission statement, with its goal to 'foster America's

dance legacy by supporting dance documentation and preservation as an integral and ongoing part of the creation, transmission and performance of dance' (National Initiative to Preserve America's Dance 2001:www).

The message of these archival institutions is clear: we should place documentation at the centre of creation itself so that as work is performed it is recorded. As a discourse constructed in a shared vocabulary, these mission statements also articulate clear perceptions about the value of archival practice. Here it is possible to see the transformation of the positive valuation of the ephemerality of live performance into a fear of ephemerality and a subsequent valuation of documentation, the document, and the archive. There is a quasi-moral dimension to this ambition, evident in the language emerging in the discussion: performance must be 'saved' or 'rescued', it is part of our 'heritage', our 'legacy', and must not be 'lost'. As a moral endeavour, the documentary ambition needs no justification beyond these aspirations themselves. The value of the archive is in the action of archiving, in the act of halting disappearance and preserving for the future.

(b) Questioning the Archive

The discourse of archival institutions presents the value of the archive as repository of a true record of the past; this becomes a promise constructed within the discourse to retain and protect our heritage and history. Many archival theorists explicitly explore this promise; Irving Velody, for example, opens an article on the theory of the archive by stating:

As the backdrop to all scholarly research stands the archive. Appeals to ultimate truth, adequacy and plausibility in the work of the humanities and social sciences rest on archival presuppositions. (Velody 1998:1)

Such a basic starting point holds true for the performing-arts archive as much as for any other, where research holds out the promise of reaching back to origins and

literally to original documents. This ability to touch items and objects from the past is, in itself, one of the key attractions of the archive; Harriet Bradley, for example, stresses the ‘pleasures, seductions and illusions of archival work’ and the ‘intoxication of the archive’ (Bradley 1999:113). Helen Freshwater also discusses this, drawing on her experience working in theatre archives to describe the ‘allure of the archive’ as in part voyeuristic pleasure and in part a justified sense of accessing authentic material (Freshwater 2003).

This seductive promise of authenticity, constructed by the archival discourse, continues to enchant even while most contemporary archive theorists – including Bradley, Freshwater, and Velody themselves – have interrogated our understanding of archival documents and historical truth. Contemporary theory examines the constructive role the historical document performs in creating our understanding of the past. Complementing the powerful imagery that declares that the archive reveals the past to us are counter-claims of archival limitation and fabrication. Theorists now stress that the promise to neutral access is based on compromised positions of selection, omission, and manipulation. Carolyn Steedman, for example, describes this constructed nature of the archive:

The Archive is made from the selected and consciously chosen documentation from the past *and* from the mad fragmentations that no one intended to preserve and that just ended up there. [...] In the Archive, you can not be shocked at its exclusions, its emptinesses, at what *is not* catalogued. (Steedman 1998:67)

Far from being complete – or authentic, neutral, or objective – Steedman correctly perceives the archive is the reverse. Interestingly this ‘anti-authoritative’ perspective can seem to posit (if only to deconstruct) greater claims of authenticity and authority than are made even by archival institutions themselves. It is possible that contemporary theorists have articulated a conception of the authoritative archive only in order to knock it down. Such articulation, however, even if hyperbolic and immediately debunked, also serves to further constitute a hypothetical cultural ideal and promise of ‘the archive’.

(c) Archive and Memory

In the performing arts, the discourse of archival authority presents the archive as an opportunity for 'proper research': proper in being both authentic and authorised and in claims to validity beyond the anecdotal or speculative. This is the attraction of the archive for the performing-arts researcher, where, as each performance disappears, it offers the possibility of supplementing and perhaps supplanting doubtful memory as the site of performance record. As theatre historian Robert L. Erenstein notes, the theatre researcher 'needs documents to justify his field of research [and] must resign himself to the ephemeral nature of the performance; once ended, it lives on only in documents and in the memory' (Erenstein 1997:185).

This comparison of the archive and memory is a popular motif in contemporary archive theory, Steedman, for example, notes a common desire to use the archive as a metaphor for memory. This observation is again present when Richard Harvey Brown and Beth Davis-Brown explore the role the archive plays in defining national memory and consciousness (Brown and Davis-Brown 1998:17-32). Irving Velody also examines the idea that the 'modern memory is above all archival'. Such parallels are particularly relevant to the performing-arts archive, especially when examined alongside radical declarations that the only trace of the live-performance event can be and should be the audience's memory. Peter Brook powerfully suggests this, declaring that the only record of the event is what the audience retains (Melzer 1995a:148); while Patrice Pavis writes that 'The only memory which one can preserve [of live performance] is that of the spectator's more or less distracted perception' (Pavis 1992:67). However, comparison of conceptions of audience memory with those of a theoretical archival memory soon reveals that they articulate very different perceptions of the objectives and value of any retention of ephemeral performance.

The enabling of a more accurate and accessible memory of live performance is one possibility articulated by discourses of archival authority. This is clear from the manner dance academic and consultant Mindy Aloff describes archives in an article titled, revealingly, 'It's Not Ephemera After All':

Although it is customary to speak about dancing as an ephemeral art that leaves nothing behind except the memory of its performance, in fact it leaves much more than you might guess: costumes and sets, musical scores, perhaps notation of the choreography, programs and reviews, photographs, letters, films, and, nowadays, hours and hours of videocassette recordings. While such leavings constitute a husk of dancing, they are also the kernels of dance history. (Aloff 2001:www)

Here Aloff constitutes the archive as our memory, our heritage, and our best access to the live performance of the past – although in a description of 'kernels' and 'husks' she also recognises the incompleteness of such leavings. As Aloff's article makes clear, the idea that the archive preserves 'our theatre history' or 'dance heritage' runs through the manifestos of archival institutions and practice. Indeed, the perception that permanent records of live performance are metaphorical replacements for fragile human memory is a prominent and lasting element of discourses of documentation. For example, in 1913 a review in *T.P.'s Weekly* of a book on the Russian Ballet declared:

The one glaring fault of the Russian Ballet is that it has passed away with the brief traffic of the stage, as is the case with all theatre work. Now, however, comes a chance of chaining the vision, of retaining links of memory to bind us to the dreams of dance, to keep forever in our view [...] The possessor of this book has the Ballet in epitome. (Anonymous 1913:764)

Many of the ideas articulated in archival discourses are echoed here: including the perception of performance as ephemeral, the desire to halt disappearance, and use of memory as a metaphor for documentation. Today, comparisons with mechanical methods of reproduction make the romanticised illustrations included in *The Russian*

Ballet seem wholly inadequate and inauthentic as documentation of the performance (A. E. Johnson 1913). However, while expectations and standards have changed as the result of technological developments, the motivation to retain transient performance in some form is the same. The result is that, almost a hundred years later, this discourse of documentation and retention remains startlingly similar in terms of its language and articulation of values. For example, in an article in *The Village Voice*, theatre reviewer Michael Feingold praises the services of the commercial Broadway Theatre Archive as offering 'videotaped memories' of theatrical performances of the past (Feingold 2000). Similarly, Marcia Siegel sees a major responsibility of the reviewer as being the 'memory' of performance, writing:

By that I don't mean that critics have the best memories [...] I mean that they are professional observers, and that what they tell us is our only systematic account of an ongoing history (Siegel 1977:xiv).

This relationship between live performance, archival activities, and memory also comes to the fore in an article by performance theorists Denise Varney and Rachel Fensham. In their support for the recording of theatre performances, Varney and Fensham echo the urgent appeals of those seeking to archive dance, with the ambition of video recording being essentially the archival objective of 'saving' live performance. They also formulate such archival endeavour as in active competition with any positive valuation of audience memory. To this end Varney and Fensham declare: 'Surely the very ephemerality of individual memories should make it suspect as a reliable record for a performance truth' (Varney and Fensham 2000:91). It is possible to see the archive, therefore, as our proper memory of performance (comparable to what Cutler describes as proper documentation) and one that is superior to actual memory in terms of its accessibility, durability, and objectivity.

Taken to extremes, Varney and Fensham, along with Aloff, seem to suggest that our performing-arts history is what exists in archives and *only* what exists in archives. As such the archive does not aid memory but replaces it. The original experience, which for Brook and Pavis exists in the audience's memory, becomes devalued in

comparison as subjective, inaccessible, and disappearing. However, a distinction needs to be made between performances of which there can be no living memory and recent performances where physical archives might be seen to be ‘in competition’ with actual audience memories. With such living memories, proper archival documentation fails to supplant memory entirely as a valuable site of performance afterlife and fails to acknowledge the full extent of the memorial representation. For the perception of memory as the sole trace of live performance is more than simply a description – it is not perceived as a problem best overcome by employment of a better ‘memory’ such as the archive – but is also a positive valuation. Comments by Eugenio Barba illustrate this:

The spectator does not consume these performances. Often s/he does not understand them or does not know how to evaluate them. But s/he continues to have a dialog with the memories which these performances have sown deep in his/her spirit. I say this not as a director but on the basis of my experience as a spectator. (Barba 1990:97)

This is what Barba means when he writes elsewhere that ‘theatrical performance resists time not by being frozen in a recording but by transforming itself’ and that such transformations are found in the memories of individual spectators. Barba does not value audience memory despite the transformations it enacts but because of them. Memory, he argues, is in this transformative, multiple, and mobile nature closer to the essential identity of the live performance after, not before, it has undergone such transformations. Consequently, if you value live performance because of its liveness – and this thesis has demonstrated that liveness is vital to conceptions of live performance – then memory must be a more appropriate site for any trace or afterlife than the frozen and unchanging archive. The archive or video recording may claim to show the live performance as it really was; but Barba declares that the performance is not really what *was* happening on stage but what *is* happening in the minds and subsequently the memories of the audience. As Barba writes:

In the age of electronic memory, of films, and of reproducibility, theatre performance also defines itself through the work that living memory, which is not museum but metamorphosis, is obliged to do. (Barba 1992:78)

Those who object to the positive valuation of the memory as a legitimate trace of live performance do so because of the subjective, inaccessible, and transformative nature of memory that Barba describes. Theatre professor Marvin Carlson, for example, writes that:

Even those fortunate enough to witness the original are unable to return to it to check the accuracy of their memory or to test subsequent hypotheses against it, and for others there remains only the thinner substance of an experience filtered through the selective consciousness and reportage of intermediaries. (Melzer 1995a:149)

Varney and Fensham echo these sentiments when they cite Keir Elam's observation in *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* that the stage spectacle has long been considered 'too ephemeral a phenomenon for systematic study' (Elam 1980:5). They also express vehement distrust of Barba's positive valuation of subjective memory, condemning it on several counts, including elitism, unacknowledged selection, and lack of detail or accountability. Although Varney and Fensham recognise why Barba places a positive valuation on transformative memory, they reject it nonetheless; memory, they state, does not 'produce a purer form of truth' (Varney and Fensham 2000:92). This, however, depends on what kind of truth about live performance one is attempting to reach, and what it is about live performance that one is attempting to 'produce' (or perhaps reproduce). Additionally, many of Varney and Fensham's objections to the positive valuation of memory can also be directed at archives and documentations in general (including video, their particular concern). While archival discourses (amongst which I would include Varney and Fensham) constitute an ideal of authenticity and authority, this fails to deliver, as recent theory makes clear, on any count of completeness, neutrality, and accuracy. Moreover, while Varney and Fensham question 'Whose memories are privileged?' they do not examine how the

impossibility of documenting all performances means that the question ‘What performances are recorded?’ is just as problematic. Finally, while memory is up-front about its transformations, all recordings also radically transform their subject but often neglect to acknowledge the importance of such mutations.

Most intriguingly, the metaphorical relationship that some writers perceive between archive and memory is perhaps *more* appropriate as a result of contemporary understandings of archives as unstable, as ‘read into’ rather than read, than for any hypothetical ideal of the authoritative archive. If each remembrance recreates memory, if memory is inherently transformative, then so is the archive’s construction of the past recreated each time it is accessed. Is it possible, therefore, to take contemporary archive theory, along with the positive valuation of memory, and develop a concept of the live-performance archive that embraces the transformative conditions of both memory and archive? In other words, instead of the instability and compromised authority of the archive being an inevitable accident, it could be transformed into the central motif of a live-performance archive celebrating mutability and fluidity. The ambition of such a project would be to reject the valuation of archival authority, to look beyond the surface authenticity of video recordings, and accept the positive appreciation of memory’s transformative powers as a positive characteristic of a mutable live-performance ‘archive’. (This theoretical archive is presented as a provocative challenge to the manner in which researchers approach all archives; it also forewarns of further speculations and evaluations I will make of other representations of live performance later in this thesis.)

(d) Archive as Detritus

One example of an imaginative rethinking of archival documentation comes from Forced Entertainment, in Tim Etchells and Richard Lowdon’s ‘Notes and Documents’ of *Emanuelle Enchanted* (Etchells and Lowdon 1994:9-24). This does not present any clear, neutral, or scientific documentation of the performance; it would be impossible to recreate *Emanuelle Enchanted* from this representation. Nor

do Etchells and Lowdon attempt to interpret, evaluate, or describe the performance. Instead, they accept the inevitable transformative effect of documentation and attempt to create a record that documents not the appearance of the performance but instead represents the experience of the performance. As Nick Kaye, editing a special issue of *Contemporary Theatre Review* on documentation, comments

[Etchells and Lowdon] use material derived from the performance to re-address concerns for excess information and incompleteness. Rather than speculating upon the ‘meaning’ of *Emanuelle Enchanted* or recounting the mechanisms by which it operated, this presentation offers an experience analogous to that of a meeting with the event which preceded it. Calling on the ‘fragmented/atomized’ nature of the performance [... T]his ‘re-presentation’ resists being read as a transparent record, but furthers the work’s dissemination through a variety of forms. (Kaye 1994:6)

Emanuelle Enchanted
Photography Hugo Glendinning
(Etchells and Lowdon 1994:17)



In *The New Theatre*, Michael Kirby suggests that the responsibility of documentation is to be objective. Kirby writes that 'If it is a clear, accurate, objective recreation of the performance, the reader will respond to the documentation in much the same way as he would have responded to the performance' (Kirby 1974b:i). This unlikely perception of objective documentation mirrors that of the authoritative archive, with the description of readers responding as if to the performance patently revealing the narrowness of the argument. Overthrowing this reliance on surface and neutrality, Etchells and Lowdon reject many of these impulses of documentation, including the underlying instinct to save or recreate the performance. Instead, they present a representation that is far from clear, accurate, or objective, which does not seek to recreate the performance but does perhaps manage to achieve the result of inspiring in the reader some of the experiences of the audience. The 'Notes and Documents' are an archive constructed not by recording the performance but by attempting to echo the memory of the performance. This is a fluid and transformative representation, an archive highlighting its own incompleteness, selectiveness, uneven qualities, and the fabricated nature in its surface appearance. Not designed to aid future reproductions, this is an archive appropriate for representing the valued liveness of live performance.

I would also like to propose, speculatively, another possible alternative archive: namely a theoretical archive of detritus. An archive of detritus would seek to mimic many of the positively valued characteristics of both the audience's memory of the performance and the liveness of live performance. To illustrate this I again turn first to the work of Forced Entertainment and the manner in which it often highlights performance process through the accumulation of 'detritus' on the stage. Many theatre productions clear up as they go along, making tidy transitions from one act to another: the props from scene one, for example, are quickly removed before the start of scene two. In contrast, traces of what has gone before often litter the stage at the end of a Forced Entertainment production: traces of the performance that was present but now has gone. Once noticed, this accumulation of performance detritus is apparent in many live performances. In, for example, Carles Santos' Latin opera *Ricardo i Elena*, where the performers take their bows on a stage littered with pianos,

picture frames, books, and gigantic remote-control furniture, traces of the previous hour's events (Santos 2001). For me the memory of the performance is contained in this final tableau, represented by remains, with the fragmented traces prompting fragmented memories. This is also experienced in Meg Stuart's dance work *appetite*, which uses a slowly hardening clay floor to physically mark the passing of time on stage as the clay crumbles and becomes damaged as the dancers perform (Stuart and Hamilton 1999). And once more in Wim Vandekeybus's *Scratching the Inner Fields*, here the debris that remains on the stage – right down to a side-winder trail of sweat tracing the final movement of a dancer through scattered earth, sticks, and discarded clothing – is a physical reminder of the moments that have passed before the audience (Vandekeybus 2002).



(left to right: *Ricardo i Elena*, *appetite*, and *Scratching the Inner Fields*.)

Stage detritus presents an 'archive' able to represent the multiple appearances of the performance. In the accumulation of these traces it is as if an immediate archive of the production is established: here is the shaky and incomplete evidence of what happened. Such archives would display their own randomness and selectiveness, mirroring the nature of the audience's memory of the production. The image of stage detritus as archive is particularly suited for unstable and multiple Forced Entertainment productions, but also appropriate for the disappearing state of all live performances and of memory. The idea of detritus as archive is also not so far from the state of all archives, which are themselves merely traces. However, the archive as detritus turns around the temptations to make assumptions of objectivity, fidelity,

consistency, and even permanence; instead claiming partiality, fluidity, randomness, memory, and disappearance. As an archive that uniquely, impossibly needs archiving if it is not to disappear, any archive of detritus must remain hypothetical although speculatively presenting new concerns and objectives for all archives. Having abandoned claims to accuracy and completeness, such an archive is able to present archival interpretations, proclamations, and demonstrations; consciously and overtly performing what all archives are by their nature already enacting.

Part Three: Live Dance and Still Photography

(a) 'A Piece of a World'

Artists, scholars, and historians, fearful of live performance's ephemerality, often seek a method of representation that will still the transient and capture the complete appearance of live performance. Still photography appears to offer this possibility, with Roland Barthes writing in *Camera Lucida* that 'the noeme of Photography, is simple, banal; no depth: "that has been"' (Barthes 1984:81). Barthes' declaration restates the widespread cultural understanding of the photograph as representative of the real world and image of something that existed. Susan Sontag follows the same idea in *On Photography*, 'what a photograph is of is always of primary importance. The assumption underlying all uses of photography [is] that each photograph is a piece of the world' (Sontag 1979:93).

The faith in photography's intrinsically accurate and objective relationship with the real was born with the emergence of photographic technology in the early nineteenth century. In *Visions of Modernity*, Scott McQuire describes the immediate acceptance of the camera in western society and how the photograph quickly became 'synonymous with fidelity in representation' (McQuire 1988:13). Texts on the history of photography – including those of Barthes, McQuire, and Sontag – are overflowing with quotations and anecdotes detailing numerous observers' testimonies to the representative pre-eminence of the photograph. Witnesses include pioneers in the field, such as Fox Talbot, Niépce, and Daguerre – who stated that

photography was a 'process which gives [nature] the power to reproduce herself' (Marian 1997:3) – along with Lumière, who declared that he 'only wished to reproduce life' (McQuire 1988:15). As this weight of cultural convention and conviction displays, there exists an extremely strong instinct to respond to photographs on this quasi-documentary level.

Yet it is not as easy as that. Photography does not reproduce reality in any simple sense; the cultural instinct to act as if it does, or at least can, needs further examination. After all, the limitations on the authenticity of the photographic image are significant, inherent, and well-known. American art theorist Barbara Savedoff, for example, notes in *Transforming Images* that despite an 'aura of objective accuracy' photography always distorts what it presents. Nonetheless, while questioning the documentary authenticity of the camera in fact, Savedoff continues to reaffirm the importance of perceptions of photographic authority: 'Whether it is warranted or not, we tend to see photographs as objective records of the world' (Savedoff 2000:49). Such perceptions of fidelity rest upon acceptance of photography as a true and authentic representation of 'reality'. For photography does not represent the world but realism; the camera is a machine designed to reproduce *mechanically* the dominant idea of representative reality, based upon geometric perspective, with the acceptance of the validity of that 'reality' deeply ingrained (McQuire 1988:18). Those eulogising photography as purveyor of 'a piece of the world' do not do so because it actually reproduces the world, but rather as a mark of its dominant position in our culture. The result – as Barthes, McQuire, Savedoff, and Sontag all rightly declare – is a state where the photographic image, despite awareness of fakery, selection, and limitation, is the standard of realism used to regulate the entire field of visual representation.

The relationship between photography and the performing arts embodies many of these observations on the cultural dominance of photographic realism. Photography offers a method of recording live performance endowed with a weight of promised accuracy and authenticity. Photographs offer an alternative and mechanical memory of performance; a validating proof that the performance, now gone, actually

happened – ‘that has been’. When Rodrigues Villeneuve asks himself ‘what do we expect from theatre photography?’ he replies:

I would say, naïvely, the saving of the performance, which disappears as fast as it is produced [... I]sn’t the photograph a physico-chemical trace of what happened at one moment on the stage? Are we not in the presence of an imprint of the theatrical real? (Villeneuve 1990:32)

This is something museum archivist Nicole Leclercq affirms when he describes photography as holding a ‘place of faithful witness and privileged memory of the theatrical phenomenon’ (Leclercq 2001:www). But again there are as many reasons to doubt the absolute documentary fidelity of the camera as there are to be seduced by it. Apart from mundane possibilities of deliberate manipulation, the photographic image isolates the time and space in a single frame intrinsically unrealistic of the world it is representing. How can a still, silent, permanent, two-dimensional image replicate the moving, temporal, multiple, transient, four-dimensional performance? Clearly it cannot; yet it remains very difficult to get away from the feeling that the resulting photograph will, in a very fundamental way, if not *be* at least *be of* the performance. It will hold all the values observed by all the witnesses paraded above: it will be objective, neutral, faithful, accurate; it will appear to show what it is of and yet also be fundamentally different from what any audience would see and experience.

(b) Live Dance and Still Photography

As a medium that can create documents of transitory events, the service that photography can provide in recording the performing arts is obvious. The history of dance alone shows how quickly the medium was seized upon as a glamorising, promotional, and documentary tool. From the very earliest days of photography in the 1830s, as William A Ewing relates in *The Fugitive Gesture*, the camera was used to document the faces, appearance, and experiences of ballet (Ewing 1987:14-15).

Very soon afterwards, in the 1840s, there occurred an explosion in the publication of celebratory event programmes crammed full of images, mainly of the ballerinas, along with albums of photographs designed to feed the period's 'balletomania' (Sorell 1981:288). Later, at the turn of the century, pioneering dance photographer and critic Carl Van Vechten drew on the camera's apparent revelatory authority to record the theatrical performers of his day, declaring that his 'interest in photography is purely documentary' (Padgette 1981:6). This dual promotional and documentary role of photography is crystallised in the many carefully posed and retouched photographs taken of Anna Pavlova in the 1910s (right), who once declared to a photographer 'my art will die with me. Yours will live on when you are gone'. (Ewing 1987:14). Such nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs of actors, dancers, and singers, of theatres and audiences, provide us with an alluring glimpse of past performers and performances. With greater claims to authenticity than illustrations or non-mechanical representations, photography (and the promises of real world documentation made for it) begins to halt the allusive disappearance of the performing arts.



Anna Pavlova, *Dragon Fly*
Ira L. Hill Studio, NY. 1914

What kind of document, however, does the photograph make of live performance? On this point, there exists a useful body of commentary on the theory and method of dance photography. The reason for this is the importance of one basic question: how can the medium of still photography represent movement, of which a crucial instance is the movement of dance? This is a problem confronted since the nineteenth century, as Ewing traces:

Dance is the movement of bodies through space and time. Dance is fluidity and continuity. Dance connects, dance unfolds. Dance envelops us; it enters through

the eye and ear. Photography imprisons in two dimensions. Photography flattens and shrinks. Photography tells the ear nothing. It fragments time and fractures space. Yet movement is the goal [...] Elizabeth McCausland voiced the paradox when she called for 'an image which though it cannot move and never can hope to move, yet will seem about to move.' (Ewing 1987:27)

Here the monumental demands made upon photography are clearly voiced: the dance must be documented truthfully, accurately, and completely by a method that captures the essential nature of the performance.

Unsurprisingly, many commentators, such as dance critic Edwin Denby, perceive a failure to achieve this goal, complaining 'You don't see the change in the movement, so you don't see the rhythm, which makes dancing. The picture represents a dancer, but it doesn't give the emotion that dancing gives you as you watch it' (Denby 1986:89). If dance is essentially the movement of bodies through time and space, then dance photography, to *be* dance photography, must document this movement. Similarly, if live performance is valued as 'live' then it is its dynamic element, its occupation of time and space, which the photographer must seek to communicate. The problem is that, while photography can document the appearance of live performance, it can do so in the only way that photography is able: as surface photographic realism. The word 'document', as a result, no longer easily conveys the ambitions of still photography; instead, photography seeks to represent the qualities and values perceived in the original live performance.

(c) Capturing Movement in Still Photography

The methods employed to represent movement in still images are numerous, including techniques that step beyond the single frame to relate movement through image sequences. Early examples of this technique are by Eadweard Muybridge, in whose work it is possible to imaginatively recreate movement by following the sequence of images, from top to bottom and left to right, as established by rules of

convention. Not surprisingly, his work includes attempts to represent dancing figures, one of the most prominent spheres of human movement (right).

Eadweard Muybridge
 'Dancing Couple'
 from *Animal Locomotion*
 (Sturgis 2001:54)



The effectiveness of such presentations of multiple images, which nudge still photography into moving pictures, do not, however, present solutions to the more problematic challenge of communicating movement in a single frame. Here photographers, including dance photographers, have borrowed from the visual arts in the use of some techniques, including graphic intervention (adding lines or symbols to the image to represent movement), or emblematic representation (flowing hair and clothes indicating motion). Other techniques seek to create the effect of multiple, moving, or repeated images (through blurring and multiple or time-lapse exposure) and employ methods that have been adapted for the camera but are not exclusive to photography. Additionally, developments in technology (such as flash and strobe lighting) have created techniques that are purely photographic and enabled the capturing of movement beyond the scope of the human eye (Braun 1997:150). Prominent examples of this are Harold Edgerton's extreme stop-action images, including that of the impact of a drop of milk in a saucer, which rely on acceptance of the photographic authenticity of something that without the camera would be impossible to see.

While there are no strict divisions across this range of methods, it is possible to see two possibilities as open to the dance photographer in the attempt to communicate movement in the still image. One option is to celebrate the camera's ability to freeze time, capture a piece of the world in a photographic instant, and proclaim 'There!'

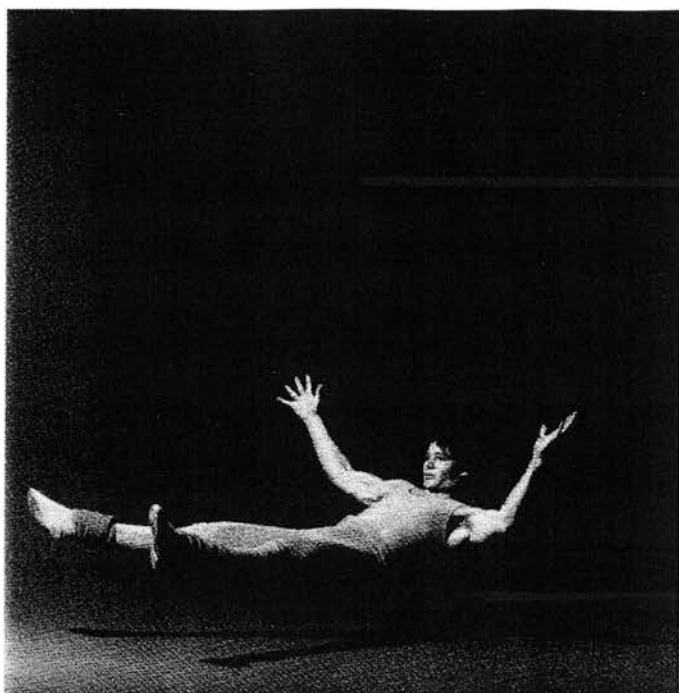
This technique follows the cultural instinct to accept the photographic image as representative of that-has-been. The other possibility is a more interventionist approach, seeking to manipulate the photographic image with conscious elaboration and choice made both before and after the shutter opens. These methods are displayed in, respectively, the work of Lois Greenfield and Chris Nash, both of whom have been widely praised for their ability to capture dance movement in still photography.

Lois Greenfield

At the same time as acknowledging the documentary motivation of dance photography, it is also worth pointing out the odd alienation of the practice from actual performances. Dance photographs have rarely ever shown the actuality of live performance; in the early twentieth century, for example, most of the images of Pavlova were posed in the studio, as were Van Vechten's 'documentary' photographs. Lois Greenfield is a good example of how this practice continues today, as she works with dancers exclusively in the studio and has even dispensed with the dance works and choreographers altogether. Instead, Greenfield works with the dancers directly, creating dances for the camera that would be meaningless outside of the studio. Nor could these dances be re-staged for an audience, for the images the movements are intended to capture are only visible to the camera's eye and, like Edgerton's images, even the photographer in the room cannot see them as they happen (Greenfield 1998:11). However, while Greenfield's work would seem to be a step away from documentation, from the photographic realism of representing something that happened, but it is made in the name of a deeper and more essential realism, which is the attempt to communicate movement (Greenfield 1992:99). Her work represents dance in the sense that it is attempting to capture the essence of dance, but is no longer *of* dance in a conventional sense. And beyond this fragmentation of her work away from actual dance performance, Greenfield's photographs are in the revelatory tradition of opening our eyes through the authoritative eye of the camera.

Almost all of Greenfield's photographs are against white backgrounds, only occasionally is the floor distinguishable and even more rarely is there a set or wall in evidence. The images appear to show people hanging in air, photographs of moments that in life would have lasted a split second. Greenfield wants the viewer to look at the fragment of movement represented in her photographs, to see the impossibility of stability in the position presented, and ask what came a second before and what follows a second after. 'It intrigues me', writes Greenfield, 'that in 1/500th of a second I can allude to past and future moments even if these are only imaged' (Greenfield 1992:116). In this manner the images are interesting embodiments of Henri Cartier-Bresson's thesis that by capturing the 'decisive moment' the still photograph can be representative of the missing whole. They also match what Lord Snowdon describes as the ambition of his theatre photography, to 'sum up a moment more than that moment' (Snowdon 1996:7). Here the decisive moment seeks to lead the viewer into contemplation of movement, reading a narrative of time into the still fragment.

These are, therefore, images displaying the decisive moment of extremes of movement – leaping, falling, flying, reaching – and it is difficult to imagine the human body in more essentially dynamic situations. Ultimately responses as to whether Greenfield's work achieves the ambition of leading the viewer beyond the moment depicted are extremely individual. For me some pictures do manage to capture the tension between the still moment represented and the inevitable movement beyond the image. One example features a single dancer, arms and legs spread eagle, face up, 10 or 20 centimetres above the ground (over). His body forms a cross-shape, echoed on the floor by his shadow. Clearly the dancer has to be falling, his body position dictates that nothing else can be happening, and in less than a second he will be on the ground. The viewer is able, in some sense forced, to read this brief narrative into the picture. Movement is captured in stillness.



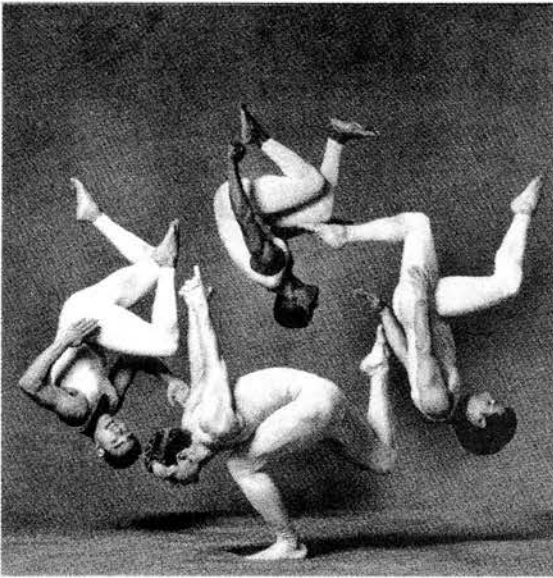
David Parsons 1986
(Greenfield 1992:Plate 33)

Other Greenfield photographs manage to communicate movement in a similar fashion. One photograph features an unbalanced man, on one leg, falling to the side; here movement is indicated by the dancer's body shape, angle, and clothes (below). Again, the brief narrative of movement is there to be read into the picture.

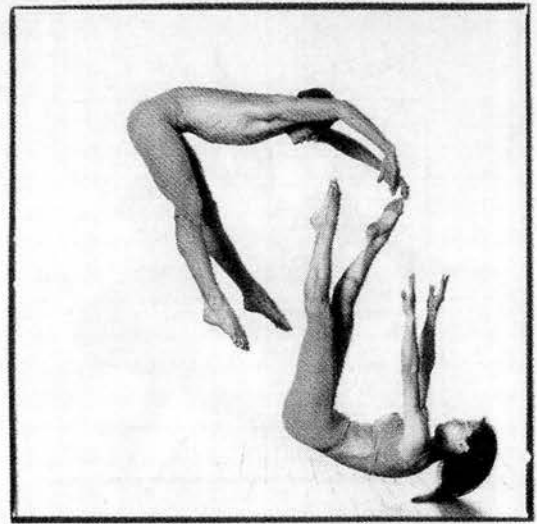


Daniel Ezralow 1982
(Greenfield 1992:Plate 56)

In contrast to these images, however, many of Greenfield's other photographs are more sculptural and stiller, indeed perhaps static. Often these static images are the more typical Greenfield photographs, featuring a white background framed by a hard black square, the dancers frozen as if in a void. These images contain no indication of space or time, no context, no indication of effort or pain or sweat, no story or possibility of narrative. These images, which in my mind fail to capture movement, remain impressive images. One example is a photograph of four tumbling dancers who together form a circle in the air (below left). In this frozen moment there is clearly the theoretical necessity of movement – to no less extent than with the falling or unbalanced dancers – yet there is no evidence of this in the photograph and the knowledge of movement comes from elsewhere. The plate contains no demonstration of effort, rhythm, or indication of context, it hints at no possible futures or pasts, and fails to communicate a narrative of movement. In another example the dancers resemble a miraculous Miró sculpture: frozen somehow as a static mobile, supported on the female performer's hair and between the fingertips and extended toes of two figures (below right).



Antigravity Dance Co. NYC 1997
(Greenfield 1998:8)



John Gallagher and Ashley Roland 1991
(Greenfield 1992:Plate 48)

Here, Greenfield's 1/500th of a second remains just that, with her images showing an abruptly suspended moment of fragmented space and time, or, as Denby puts it, 'the monstrousness of arrested motion' (Denby 1986:90). Alexander Sturgis suggests

possible reasons for this in a discussion of attempts in painting and engraving to convey movement in a single image. While comparing various images of falling figures, Sturgis tries to determine why some ‘work’ in conveying movement so much better than others. By way of possible explanation, Sturgis draws attention to Hendrik Goltzius’ series of ‘somersaulters’, *The Four Disgraces*. Although depicting falling figures, Sturgis suggests the series communicates not movement but instead a ‘curious calm’ (below). This, he suggests, is because the somersaulters are depicted with exact detail, every hair and muscle defined:

The elaboration of detail somehow militates against the impression of movement which, experience tells us, is more easily obtained with a few swift, dynamic strokes than by meticulous rendering. (Sturgis 2000:40-42)



Hendrik Goltzius, *Phaeton*
(Sturgis 2001:40)

Greenfield’s frozen images, precise and exact, with even the furrowed brows of the dancers visible and not a blur or smudge in sight, are perfect examples of this meticulous depiction. Now the depiction is automatic, with the camera having no problem distinguishing details no matter how fast the movement. Perhaps detail and perfect reproduction of surfaces appearances do indeed run counter to our instinctive evaluation of the aesthetics of movement, as without all the details the viewer has to engage imaginatively with the image.

Like Greenfield, British photographer Chris Nash largely works with dancers in the studio, although he does usually photograph pre-arranged choreography. He has also spoken of the difficulties of working in venues: low lighting, dirty stages, not knowing what will happen next, and nothing being repeated. In contrast, Nash declares, studio pictures are clearer and 'more immediate than all those grainy, harsh stage photos. And [the photographs] managed to convey the spirit and excitement of dance so elegantly' (Nash 1993:3). Again, note the emphasis on communicating not just the appearance of dance, but also the desire to represent a more essential spirit and excitement. However, although Nash's intentions are similar to those of Greenfield, the methods of his execution are very different.

Greenfield's images rely on the camera's ability to declare authoritatively that-has-been, they hope to capture movement in a realm beyond that of our normal senses. In contrast, Nash seeks to work with our expectations and prejudices, displaying movement more as we might experience it ourselves. The surprise is that to achieve this aim Nash's photographs have to be more interventionist, less 'realistic' as they undermine surface fidelity to communicate a constructed representation of movement. His work employs a wide range of representational techniques, a large element of conscious choice, of context and allusion, of colour, indistinctness, and intervention. Rather than Greenfield's 'frozen' moments, Nash's work is one of bleeding or multiple moments.

Often Nash employs a whole variety of techniques to communicate movement in a single image. A photograph of Javier de Frutos (over), for example, demonstrates how he uses fabric to symbolize and retain the memory of movement, while the use of multiple exposures creates the impression of blurred arms and multiple hands.

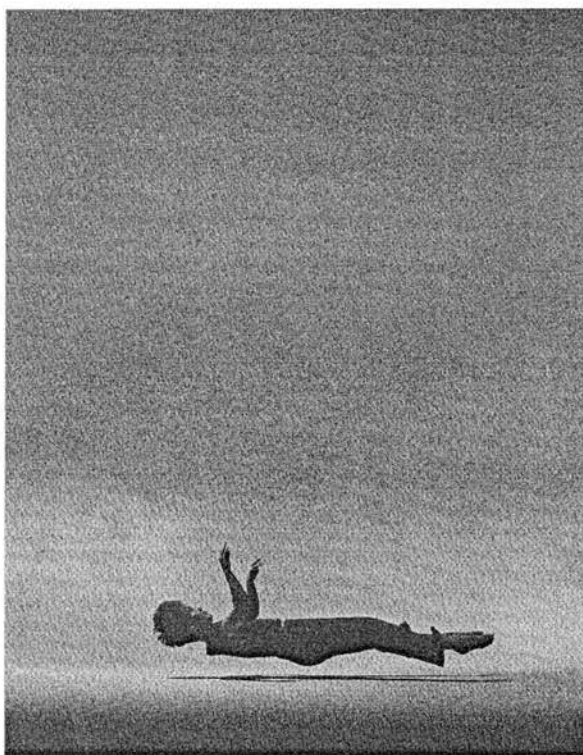


Javier de Frutos 'The Place Does Not Forgive' 1995
(Chris Nash 2001:30)

This picture is black and white, but characteristic of much of Nash's work is the use of brightly coloured backgrounds and often distorting coloured lighting. Another image features a dancer in what could be a trademark Greenfield pose, at the top of a leap with the potential of reading descent and therefore movement into the image

(Nash 2001:8). Here, however, Nash's image is far from perfect, with the bright colours and intervening lighting militating against overwhelming detail (the dancer's feet, hands, face, and indeed entire outline are indistinct). Lighting effects in Nash's work ensure that his dancers often display form but no detail and, along with distorting camera angles, seek to distort the human body; perhaps in doing so they remind the viewer of their own physicality and thereby provoking the sympathetic sensation of movement. His work has also used animation, computer, and other graphic effects. Many of these approaches are employed in an epic montage, *Assemblage* (Nash 2000), a cyclorama of dancers creating a dizzying experience as the viewer walks past it, the viewer physically providing an interestingly literal twist to the idea that dance photography must provoke the sensation of movement.

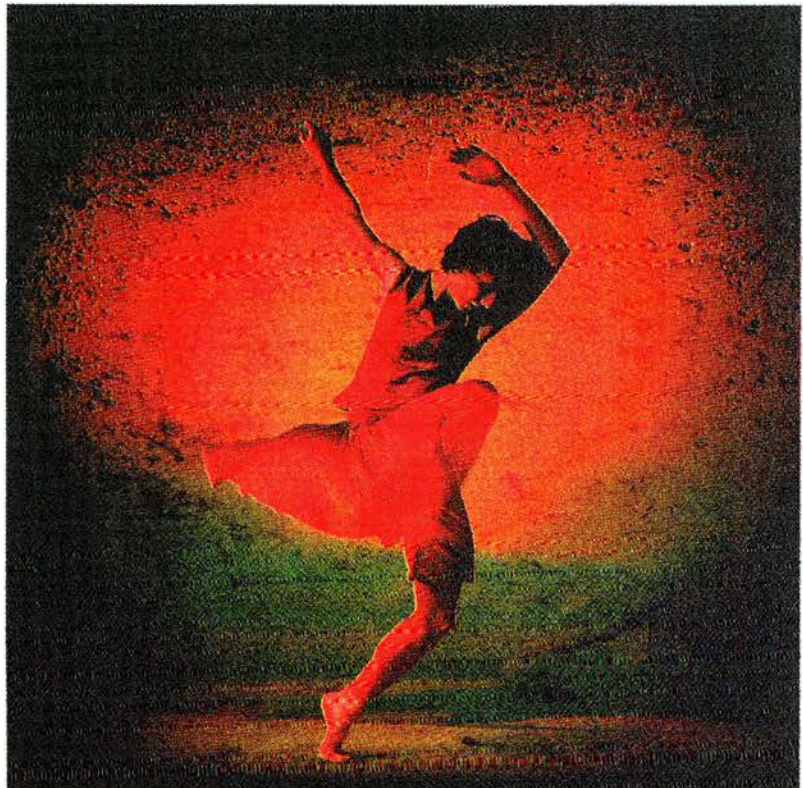
Another Nash image is startlingly similar to a Greenfield photograph already mentioned, featuring a single dancer just a few inches above the ground, her shadow echoing her body above (right). Interestingly, Nash notes of this picture: 'Although it was tempting, there is actually no faking in this picture. I'm still not sure how Ruth managed to do this but she didn't have any help from me (or my computer)' (Nash 2001:43). Although Nash feels the need to draw attention to this picture's authentic status as something that happened this is not all-important and he (unlike Greenfield) does not reject intervention and manipulation.



Motionhouse 'Fake it' 1997
(Nash 2001:33)

Nash, it is clear, does not hesitate to use interventionist techniques, all of them seeking to go against conventional use of the camera to show perfect surface appearances of how things ‘really’ are. However, by employing these methods Nash often manages to successfully capture the movement of the performers and communicate the essential appeal of the dances he is representing. In one photograph, many of these elements combine in an image that physically communicates movement through posture, intersubjective awareness of balance, indistinctness and lighting, right down to the sharply bent toes of the dancer (that she is grounded only adding to the image’s potential to narrate motion – below). Richard Alston, the choreographer of the movement depicted, describes it well:

I find this almost painterly image a powerful metaphor for things which are for me essential about the dances I make. Energy without tension, a sense of flying through space but at the same time a real weightiness of movement. (Nash 2001:38)



Richard Alston Dance Co.
'Red Run' 1988
(Nash 2001:4)

The most successful dance images work when they ask the viewer to become engaged with the movement themselves. The pictures that do 'work' do so because they manage to escape the limits of the photograph's constricting temporal and spatial frame by engaging the viewer's imagination. Dance photography works best, as Greenfield herself suggests, when the images demand that the viewer ask what happens immediately before and immediately after the photograph. Discussing Nash's work, gallery manager Peter Ride also describes this idea, noting that the skill in dance photography is in making the image suggest more. But Ride notes that this is not just a case of the photograph working: the viewer must also have the imagination to look further into the picture and see what might be possible (Nash 1993:8). Novelist and art critic John Berger also describes this lucidly:

An instant photographed can only acquire meaning insofar as the viewer can read into it a duration extending beyond itself. When we find a photograph meaningful we are lending it a past and a future. (McQuire 1988:59)

Indeed, a 1986 America court case between Barbara Horgan, executor of the Balanchine estate, and the publishers Macmillan raised similar possibilities about the representation of movement in still photography. Horgan brought an action of copyright infringement against Macmillan for the publication of photographs of Balanchine's *The Nutcracker*, the principle issue being whether still photographs could infringe the copyright on the choreography for a ballet. In the original trial, the court decided in favour of Macmillan, taking the argument that 'choreography is the flow of steps in a ballet, which could not be reproduced from the still photographs in the book'. The court, therefore, essentially argued that still images could not communicate movement. On appeal, however, the original verdict was overturned. First, the appellate court argued that the test for infringement of copyright was not 'whether the original work may be reproduced from the copy – as the district judge held – but whether the alleged copy is substantially similar to the original.' Second, on this point of similarity, the appeal court found that it was possible for still photography to communicate movement, arguing that the first court

took a far too limited view of the extent to which choreographic material may be conveyed in the medium of still photography. A snapshot of a single moment in a dance sequence may communicate a great deal. It may capture, for example, a gesture, the composition of dancers' bodies or the placement of dancers on the stage. [...] A photograph may also convey to the viewer's imagination the moments before and after the split second recorded. (Feinberg 1986:www)

A repeated comparison in the case was made between a photograph of choreography and a single note of music, perhaps inspired by Denby's suggestion that a photograph of a single gesture in dance 'is like hearing only one note of a piece of music, or one word of a poem' (Denby 1986:89). The second court dismissed this comparison, arguing that it was possible for still photography to 'convey to the viewer's imagination the moments before and after the split second recorded' and found for Horgan. As this discussion reveals, still photography can communicate dance movement not just through what it shows, or documents, but also by engaging the viewer's imagination as a representation of the absent live performance.

(d) Documentary Photography?

The pursuit of capturing dance in photography has been a documentary ambition that, in the attempt to record dance, has lead photographers a long way from dance. Ewing notes the paradoxical practice of representing the essence of dance in the absence of the reality of a pre-existent dance, writing of Greenfield's rejection of performance photography, 'She realised that such photographs could at best be only pale documents of onstage reality' (Greenfield 1998:108). Added to this literal detachment from the stage are Greenfield's and Nash's use of techniques, whether of manipulation or the photographic revelation of that beyond our normal senses, which depict dance as never seen by an audience.

With both Greenfield and Nash, photography, eulogised for its ability to show the world as it really is, fails to document the live performance of dance to such extent

that it forces the photographer to create a new reality especially for the camera. As images of dance, therefore, what we see in the photographs is not what we would see in life. However, in a more meaningful sense they are pictures attempting to capture what we would experience in life and what is valued of dance. The value of these photographs lies in their ability to show us a world that could not be witnessed but which is somehow 'truer' all the same. As with memory, it is the transformative qualities of photography that makes it able to represent liveness and not its surface claims to authenticity.

In this it is possible to see how the struggles of dance photographers to get the picture they desire repeats the debate as to the purpose of extra-performance discourses. Is the ambition to document, and thereby preserve and record 'reality' faithfully; or to represent, and hence communicate value, experience, and emotion? While these ambitions may often accompany each other unproblematically, the question of how best to articulate the perception of live performance becomes interesting when the ideas of recording appearances and representing essences begin to diverge. As photography demonstrates, it is worth exploring the possibility that the best way to represent something is not to look at it at all. Greenfield's and Nash's photographs are not *of* dance; but, on occasions and at their best, they *are* dance in a whole number of much more interesting ways.

Part Four: Notation as the Representation of Performance

(a) Notation as Documentation

'Choreography', writes Ann Hutchinson Guest in *Dance Notation*, 'has been called "the throwaway art" because so many ballets were allowed to be forgotten' (Hutchinson Guest 1984:xi). Even as recently as 1990, a study in the United States declared that there was a 'crisis in the documentation and preservation of dance', suggesting that the lack of widely accepted methods of documentation continued to result in dance leaving few records behind (Dance Heritage Coalition 2001:www).

To counter the common disappearance of choreography, dance scholars and historians have often imagined notation as the solution to the needs of preservation. This continues to be the case today, despite the contemporary existence of many other possible methods of documentation (particularly video). For dance notators the objective of their aspiration is the model of music notation, with its widespread standardisation and (relative) precision. Hutchinson Guest herself writes that the ambition must be to develop a notational system that would be 'to dance what music notation is to music and the written word to drama' (Hutchinson Guest 1984:xiv). I will return to the significance of (and implicit judgements within) the second half of this statement later.

Many dance scholars enviously perceive notation as having provided music with a method of preserving and safeguarding musical history. Notation enables music to be written down, making possible its communication across generations. As musicologist and library historian D.W. Krummel puts it: 'Music on paper lasts; it can aspire to immortality, enduring for centuries, conquering the ravages of time. Such has been an article of faith, at least for two centuries and, deteriorating paper notwithstanding, even now' (Krummel 1987:6). The long heritage of western music largely demonstrates the 'literacy' that written notation provides and its success in fulfilling its documentary purpose. In contrast, dance, which has not had the benefit of an established and accessible form of written notation, is 'illiterate'; consequently, dance typically vanishes soon after performance. As theorist and former dancer Alan Salter suggests 'dance is unique in the uncertainty of its history' (Salter 1978b:3). Attempts to remedy this situation, notes Hutchinson Guest, have inspired more than 85 complete systems of dance notation over the centuries, the primary purpose of which was simply that of preserving a culture's dance.

These issues crystallise when requirements of copyright law confront the problems of dance documentation. Until the second half of the twentieth century, dance's status as non-'literate' performance was embodied in its almost total non-existence in copyright law. Instead, the law considered dance under regulations existing for theatre, effectively protecting only the dramatic content of narrative ballets. The law

provided no protection for the actual choreography. To copyright something, it had to exist on paper: one had to 'fix' it, as the script was seen as fixing spoken drama or the score as fixing music. This problem was not addressed until the emergence of the Laban and Benesh notation systems, as a result of the recognition of which American law changed in 1978 to give specific recognition to choreography (Hutchinson Guest 1984:181-183, C. Johnson and Snyder 1999:3 and Van Camp 1994). Yet, the need to have a work 'fixed' on paper to copyright it resisted the arrival of audio-visual recording technologies until even more recently. In the UK, video or film of a dance did not count as 'fixing' until 1989, when the law changed to allow electronic recordings of dance and music to be copyrighted (Whitley 1995:152).

Legally, therefore, the choreographic element of dance did not exist until methods of recording or notation gained acceptance. Not only did dance disappear, but also its inability to be present on paper denied it existence as a legal and hence perhaps even cultural entity. This position reflects the perceived authority of other proper representations of live performance, such as published or archived documentations. The perception is that, unless properly documented, ephemeral live performance cannot be studied, protected – or perhaps even be said to exist. The promise of widely accepted systems of dance notation is that they grant choreography status, legitimacy, and literacy.

(b) More (and Less?) than Documentation

Notation, therefore, has a documentary function, enabling the creation of a lasting record and preventing the possible disappearance of a performing art. This suggests a straightforward relationship between notation and performance: the performance comes first and the notation copies it down on paper. However, music notation (the aspiration of prospective dance documentations) is more than purely a documentary tool. The score also has huge importance in the facilitation of performance and indeed in the composition of music. The use of notation in the composition of works has arguably been essential to the development of western music. This is not a statement concerning disappearance due to a lack of notation (the traditional fear of

dance). Instead, it is a statement that western music needs notation to exist in the first place: an anterior function of notation in relation to performance. Music notation does not have just a recording function but also has a vital function in composition and performance.

Following on from this, the perception is that any system of dance notation could soon also gain more than a purely documentary purpose. In first stressing notation's role in the 'preserving of choreographic works', Hutchinson Guest reflects the history of the disappearance of choreography. However, she quickly moves on to list other potential uses of notation, including facilitating the communication and performance of new work. Those advocating dance notation believe it could (just like the musical score) aid the dancer's learning of a piece from the written score and assist in revising previous productions from accurate written notations rather than from unclear video or possibly inaccurate memory (Dance Notation Bureau 2001:www).

There is, however, one further possible use of dance notation with much more radical implications. Would it be possible for choreographers, again using dance notation like the music score, to *devise* a performance in notation? Such a question also prompts speculation as to whether choreography developed and written in notation would be different to one developed in the body and with the dancers. Moreover, would choreography written in one form of notation be different from one developed in another form of notation? While little choreography has been initially devised in notation, the disputes that rage between competing forms of dance notation subtly demonstrate the significance of such questions. The different abilities and backgrounds of these different systems make concrete the argument that the tool of any composition in part determines the appearance of the work.

In the dispute over the merits of different forms of dance notation Hutchinson Guest, herself a proponent of Labanotation, states that in comparison Benesh Notation is slower, less accurate, less detailed, and less flexible. More importantly, she suggests that Benesh Notation, most prominently and successfully employed at the Sadler's

Wells Royal Ballet, 'functions normally within a known style of dance, a particular "language". [...] If one does not know which "language" is being represented, one does not always know exactly how to interpret the symbols on the page' (Hutchinson Guest 1984:178). Alan Salter, in a booklet published by the Laban Centre, similarly argues that Benesh Notation flattens movement in two dimensions as determined by the characteristics of the proscenium arch venues where most ballet performances take place (Salter 1978a:5).

Fernau Hall, however, directly reverses these statements and argues that Labanotation is itself only suited to the dance style of the period when it was devised (the 1920s). Hall additionally suggests that 'attempts to adapt it to ballet have come up against great obstacles; for here great precision is needed and even the simplest poses and steps are in fact of great complexity' (Hall 1983:395). In contrast, Hall declares that Benesh Notation has 'succeeded where so many others had failed'. The creators of Benesh Notation (Rudolf and Joan Benesh) also enter the dispute, suggesting that the association of their system with one style of dance is the result of it being successfully used in classical ballet, not of any intrinsic bias towards it. Indeed, they declare that Benesh Notation is an entirely neutral form of notation and 'unlimited in possibilities'. For, they write, 'a cursory glance would show to any discerning person that here is a very pure movement notation with no bias towards any kind of movement' (Benesh 1977:10).

The Beneshs' suggestion that there is any such thing as 'pure movement notation' is perhaps the result of philosophical naivety or else a crusading zeal on behalf of their creation. More impartially, it is clear that the two competing forms of notation, both designed to document movement, fundamentally define dance as they record dance. All systems of representation record what they consider important about their subject and inevitably leave out elements either neglected or considered unimportant. Here Jonathan Miller's comments on the video recording of theatre performances are applicable to notation and all methods of representation:

If called upon to copy [a performance] we would copy what we thought was important, and in that very act would adapt the production even if we had agreed to the idea that copying meant producing something indistinguishable. (Miller 1986:52)

Additionally, what any system of notation can record has the potential to define subsequently what is considered valuable about a performance, a self-perpetuating system where notation drastically affects perceptions and definitions of performance.

If a system of notation drastically defines its subject even when it is performing a posterior documentary function, this situation is even more prominent when a notation has an anterior compositional function. Here a less widely used dance notation, the Eshkol-Wachmann Movement Notation, is of interest as a method which, although also used to document movement, was specifically designed with the creation of original choreography in mind. Choreographers often devise dances in the presence of the performers, and, as dance critic George Beiswanger writes, 'Dances are not merely performed by dancers; they are composed upon the bodies of dancers' (Beiswanger 1962:14). This practice roots choreography to creation in the human body with movements coming from the body rather than given to the body. The ambition of the Eshkol-Wachmann system is to 'free' dance from the restraints of this practice and thereby enable experimentation with compositions based instead upon series of progressions of spatial intervals comparable to the temporal intervals of music notation. Hutchinson Guest suggests that Noa Eshkol, who devised the system in the 1950s, may still be the only choreographer to compose completely on paper and writes that:

By using the notation as a tool Eshkol has composed sequences of movement which would not otherwise have come to mind – or should one say, to body. (Hutchinson Guest 1984:108)

Here it is clear that a new notational method opens new ways of thinking: in this case, choreography designed with (and impossible without) notation. The

unfamiliarity of dance notation allows these forming, restricting, and enabling functions of notation to be more easily recognised. However, each of these points could also be made about the music score and the play-script, as each also reflects what is valued about their forms and (partially) shapes what can be composed. Musicologist Hugo Cole, for example, suggests that 'The influence of the structure of language and notations on the modes of thought of its users is profound but immeasurable' (Cole 1974:12). So, whether anterior or posterior to performance, notation must always do more than merely document performance, as any system inevitably moulds the fundamental appearance of the performance it notates.

(c) Joy in Notation

In many cases, particularly in music and theatre (if the script is considered a form of notation) but also potentially in dance, notation literally comes before the performance. Such 'prescriptive' notation in a sense creates (or has the potential inspiration to create) the performance. This anterior existence puts the relationship between notation and performance into another perspective, which Pavis' somewhat unreflective comments on the 'Text as Score' reveal:

For textual 'purists,' those who reject any *mise-en-scène* as necessarily distortions, the text is considered to be an end in itself. (Whereas no fan of music would dare to say that he preferred to read Beethoven's score to going to a concert.) (Pavis 1998:323)

Except, of course, that a fair number of music aficionados would indeed prefer to read the score rather than attend a performance, or at least would value the two differently. Similarly, Rodolf and Joan Benesh imagine a time when 'dance-lovers' would, like music-lovers, reach for a score and prefer to read a dance on the page than see it in performance (Benesh 1977:3). While there are a variety of reasons why the score or script might come to be valued over and above the performance such motivations rest largely on two points: first, that the notation is the work's original incarnation; second, on the understanding that the notation is complete.

It is possible to perceive a notation as original and hence the crucial thing because of its anterior existence, to which any subsequent additions or changes are, in Pavis' language, 'distorting'. Perception of the authority and genius of the artist or creator also encourages greater valuation of the original work. While a novel-reader, for example, invariably experiences a work directly, accessing the original words and (romantically) the mind of the artist, performance in contrast mediates the 'intention' of the artist through its inevitably collaborative nature. For textual purists, therefore, performance is merely secondary, mediated, and imperfect. But if the notation is read directly as a text then these negative aspects of performance would be avoided and the artist's work accessed without distortion. To fulfil this ambition, the notation would have to be perceived as whole in itself, not requiring completion through performance.

That a work in notation is complete before performance is a position unconsciously embodied in observations made about the play-script by dance commentators. Fernau Hall contrasts the illiterate and missing history of dance with the present and clearly literate history of plays and, as already noted, Hutchinson Guest hopes that notation would one day serve dance as the word serves theatre. Both Hutchinson Guest and Hall evidently see the play-script as performing adequate anterior and posterior notation of theatre. This perception is dependent on the implicit understanding that in fixing the words the script captures what is essentially valuable about theatre. This runs counter to what many theatre practitioners and researchers would understand as the situation: for Pavis the script is simply not the stage score. Additionally, Jonathan Miller observes that 'The text of a play is surprisingly short on the instructions required to bring a performance into existence' (Miller 1986:34).

The next step in the valuation of notation over performance is that taken by Pavis' 'textual purists'. If the script captures the most important (perhaps the only important) elements of theatre, then why not just read the script? Why confuse everything, why compromise the clarity of the text and the 'genius' of the author by the muddle of performance? If the script or score contains all the essential

information about a work, then the implication is that everything else is inessential, unnecessary, or worse than unnecessary: inaccurate and distorting. For those like the Beneshs for who 'the score constitutes the real work' (Benesh 1977:120), the notation represents everything important completely, accurately, and faithfully. Such declarations could be in Cole's mind as he notes that 'in a literate age, respect for the written word or note stands high. Many come to think the authentic message is somehow *in* the book or score, and that later realisations are only imperfect versions of ideal truth' (Cole 1974:122).

Such a position, concerning a Beethoven score and a Shakespeare script, is grounded upon a determination of what is valuable. In theatre the words and the meaning of the words are valuable, not the stage action and appearance, not even the pitch, duration, stress, and intensity given to the words in performance. And just as the script privileges meaning over delivery, so does reading the musical score highlight the structure, the intellectual properties, and the abstract relationships over sensuous sonic experience, submission to the determinate state of real time, and appreciation of risk. Hence, with notation it is the abstract and structural elements that are perceived as what is valuable about music, not the expressiveness or emotional impact of performance. Something Ralph Vaughan Williams recognises when he argues that silent reading of a score is 'at best purely intellectual' (Vaughan Williams 1996:125).

(d) Notation as Representation of Performance

However, the idea of notation as text-and-end-in-itself and the silent reading of the score need not (in theory) exclude all sensuous and sensory elements of the work. Indeed, anecdotal reports of a primary joy in notation abound. These include descriptions of people who are able to read music notation fluently enough to experience an apparently complete performance in their mind. One example relates how fifteen-year-old Mozart was unable to attend a performance of an opera in Milan, but reconciled himself with the thought that 'Fortunately I know nearly all the arias by heart and so I can see and hear it at home in my head' (Anderson 1984:205).

Another tells how Donald Francis Tovey, aged ten, once apparently perplexed his family by spontaneously standing and applauding a written score he had just finished reading. Asked what he was doing he replied ‘Oh, I beg your pardon, I thought I *heard* it’ (Mark 1981:303).

In these examples, the score apparently becomes a complete replacement for performance, which in turn appears irrelevant and unnecessary (except for those unable to adequately read notation). This possibility has sparked many debates as to what the exact relationship is between an actual performance and the silent reading of a score in the mind. For musicologist Thomas Carson Mark the evidence that some people have the ability to read scores silently is proof enough that it is possible and renders performance unnecessary for acquaintance with the work. However, Mark also rightly points out that this does not make performance either undesirable or identical to silent readings (Mark 1981:304). Else why would Mozart show any regret what-so-ever at having to miss the opera or Tovey become a noted concert-pianist and conductor?

Clearly, both Mozart and Tovey must have perceived and experienced differences between their silent readings of music and actual performances of music. What and how important these differences were it is impossible to tell. However, it seems to me that a range of differences exist, which, taken together, construct a fundamental difference of kind between two distinct experiences of ‘performance’. For I would argue that notation – even when anterior to performance and even when potentially experienced through a reading of the score – remains a *representation* of performance, and I will try to explain why.

At the same time as suggesting that performance is unnecessary for acquaintance with a piece of music, Mark argues that even in silent readings it is sounds to which one responds. Therefore, ‘one must have certain concepts, derivable only from experience, in order to be receptive to certain elements in a text or score. [...]ne must know what sounded music is like in order to read a score’ (Mark 1981:303-304). To me this suggests that the score, even in the silent reading of the notation,

remains a representation of a performance. A silent reading imagines the score as heard sound and not as silent meaning, symbolism, or significance. Both Tovey ('thought I heard it') and Mozart ('see and hear') clearly suggest exactly this ability to stage the score in the mind as if it were a performance. Susanne Langer similarly describes silent readings of music as 'inward hearings', thereby linguistically fixing them as something very different from simple readings (Langer 1953:137).

Confirming these ideas in relation to dance, the Beneshs suggest that, when reading dance notation, 'Never must the signs [...] be treated and learnt as symbols' but instead used as an impulse to 'mentally see' what they represent (Benesh 1977:3). Moreover, Alan Salter observes that 'translation is necessary before the reader can visualise (literally or in body sensation) the dance' (Salter 1978b:4). Here the visualisation of dance stands in for the hearing of music, again the reader translating the notation into a performance – not merely reading the score. In the frequently made comparisons between the silent reading of written language and the silent reading of notation, this inward performance seems to me to be a fundamental distinction: we respond primarily to the meaning of words, while we respond to the sound of music. Musical notation is the representation of these sounds on paper, and therefore the representation of performance.

There is, additionally, a very wide consensus that, for a performance to occur, even the most detailed of notations must be added to (Feibleman 1970:297, Cole 1974:128, and Behrman 1976:75). If this is the case with actual performances then it must equally be so with imagined performances, whether of dance, music, or theatre notation. Notation, in this sense, is an invitation to creativity, an incomplete representation that can become (actual or imagined) a performance. Further demonstration that works are not 'complete' until performed is that even the most careful 'prescriptors' – the dramatists and composers who record most in their notations – are often the ones keenest to show that their works *can* be performed and indeed *are* to be performed. For example, Samuel Beckett directed his intricately detailed play-texts and Karlheinz Stockhausen was one of three conductors needed for the even more fastidious *Gruppen*.

While notation and the inward performance of notation are therefore representations of performance, fundamental differences exist between actual and imagined performances. These include physical differences between the experience of exterior (heard) sound and the imagination of sound, along with emotional differences caused by differences between external and imagined stimulus. As Vaughan Williams suggests, the musical experience of beauty, exhilaration, intense emotion, or relaxation are probably only possible through encounter with actual, external musical sounds (Vaughan Williams 1996:125). To this I would add the importance of the experience of multiple performers and artists other than oneself, which provides stimulus and detail far beyond the individual imagination. The vital point in relation to this thesis, however, is that imagined performances cannot be experienced with any of the characteristic elements of liveness that I highlighted in Chapter One as being particular to the medium of live performances. The imagined performance cannot recreate an actual performance's occupation of space: including the presentational aspect (especially the experience of something being done for you by human performers) and awareness of the intersubjective *thereness-for-me* of others. Further, the imagined performance is solitary, with no audience and no heightened spatial environment to sharpen emotions and strengthen perceptions. In contrast, the live performance always occurs in space, happening 'here', while the imagined representation of performance could be occurring anywhere but in fact is happening nowhere. Further, only live performance occurs in a determined temporal order, which directs and drives the experience from without, providing a dynamic tension and appreciation of performative risk. The temporally unique live performative occurs 'now', the imagined performance of notation happens whenever, but in reality never.

(e) Risk in Notation

Additionally, however, I also want (somewhat paradoxically) to suggest that while the risk of live performance cannot exist in imagined performances, it can (to a certain extent) exist in written notation. Writing in the 1960s, musicologist Kurt Stone observed that instrumental composers were pursuing two divergent directions,

both requiring notational innovations: the first was 'towards uncompromising exactitude and predictability'; the second was towards chance (Stone 1976:9, see also (Cole 1974:127-130). This was an issue particularly vibrant in the 1960s and 70s, demonstrated by Stockhausen's movement from hyper-exact notation to indeterminacy and by Merce Cunningham's and John Cage's often collaborative interest in chance procedures in composition and performance. However, while somewhat dated in its urgency, the issue still raises interesting concerns and concepts about notation.

The move towards determination in notation was in the arguably futile attempt to prevent ambiguity and provide a truly complete notational system. Any such system would limit the input and therefore distorting mediation of the performer, allowing a more direct relationship between composition and listener. However, when performed by musicians, even the most determined composition is always open to errors, interpretation, and notational indeterminacy. Stone argues that such performances become merely 'stabs in the direction of the composer's envisioned perfection of execution.' He continues to suggest that, to resolve the problems of unsuccessful attempts at determined notation, composers 'have begun to relegate such works to electronic performance media which assure absolute accuracy' (Stone 1976:30). Stone concludes his article by posing (unanswered, although his use of the loaded term 'relegate' does suggest some degree of personal or emotional response) a question over the future of human performances. Indeed, given technological resources, his argument that the desire to determine composition through controlled notation should logically exclude human performers is persuasive. Pushing this idea further, if all notation is inevitably indeterminate, then is all notation always for live performance? Today, if we desire, technology can produce a single correct execution, without risking the distortions of performance or even notation. In which case, why produce notation if not because it is a representation of multiple potential live performances? Additionally, while investigating the implication of determined notational approaches, Stone does not similarly follow through the logic of 'chance' composition, which must in contrast place ever-greater emphasis on the human performer and live performance.

The introduction of deliberate elements of indeterminacy in notation has another significant effect: the idea of chance has absolutely no relevance, or possibility, in relation to either recorded or imagined performance – the notation of chance can only be performed live. That this is so is certain: a recorded performance makes a choice as to how to interpret the notation, how to play the chance, and in doing so determines the music and makes the concept of chance redundant. While a particular live performance must also make a choice, that decision is manifest only in the moment of its creation and subsequently exists only in the (transformative) memory of the audience. The notation of chance, in a sense, re-exists immediately after the instance of its live performance, while the recording permanently fixes only one possibility of the notation. The performance of chance in imagined performance is also, I would suggest, an impossible proposition. The implication of chance in imagination, of risk or surprise in one's own mind, is difficult to conceive, and the more likely action is to imagine simultaneously all the possibilities that the score presents.

Deliberately indeterminate notation, therefore, can only be performed live: it is in a sense live notation. Oddly cogent to this is Cunningham's suggestion, in *Changes: Notes on Choreography*, that 'the use of chance methods demanded some form of visual notation to allow for possibilities' (Cunningham 1968). That notation, or some degree of pre-planning, is necessary for the performance of chance is somewhat incongruous but persuasive. The audience perception of live performance is one directed temporal presence, risk, immediacy, and uniqueness all experienced within a structure of repeated performance runs and prior scripts or scores. Live-performance chance is similarly experienced within the structure of pre-planned notation, marking it as something there to seen and experienced (as presentational) rather than the entirely fortuitous accidents of the unrepresented everyday.

Part Five: Video and Recording Liveness

Video technology, particularly in relation to dance and theatre, is perhaps the ultimate test case where questions of ethics and ideologies in documenting live performance are concerned. More than any other medium, video is seen by commentators as either the saviour or the death of live performance. Attitudes to video documentation in theory and practice sharply reiterate many of the disputes over the rights and wrongs of live-performance representation already encountered in this chapter. Like still photography, video technology prompts claims of faithful and mechanical documentation, but now recording appearance in space *and* time. However, the very strengths of this claim threaten the prized uniqueness of the live-performance event. Video splits those seeking preservation in documentation from those seeking another sort of preservation: the preservation of unique liveness and transience.

(a) The Promise of Video

The allure of video is such that for some it is the answer to all the calls for accurate, vital, and faithful documentation. Such belief often exhibits an instinctive (and hence perhaps unconsidered) acceptance of video as a transparent documentary medium. Indeed, Susan Sontag suggested in 1966 that film (or as easily today video) is 'relatively speaking, a transparency, and it seems correct to say that one is seeing the event filmed' (Sontag 1966:25). Further evidence of this perception appears in statements such as that in the preface to Michael Kirby's *The New Theatre*: 'The need for performance documentation lies in the nature of theatre itself. [...] We have not yet reached the point where all – or even the most significant – theatrical presentations are recorded on film or video tape' (Kirby 1974b:i). This declaration is unquestioned, unelaborated, and unexplored; the implication is that video would solve all the documentary problems of theatre, if only all theatrical performances could be recorded.

Dance scholar Allegra Fuller Snyder offers a similar appraisal of the documentary importance of video to dance, writing that 'Since video made it easier to capture movement in time and through space, the ephemeral aspect of dance was fast becoming less of an issue' (C. Johnson and Snyder 1999:8). Snyder notes the increasingly widespread use of video by dance companies since the late 1970s, employed to counter fears of disappearance and (as an easily accessible alternative to dance notation) as an aid for learning roles and revising productions. Especially as the dancer has traditionally learned from watching others, and as most dancers cannot read any form of notation, this seems the natural solution to the notational difficulties of choreography. Organisations such as the Dance Heritage Coalition present video as an unproblematic and obvious progression and actively campaign for greater video documentation (Dance Heritage Coalition 2001:www). This view is repeated again in the zeal of many dance institutions and commentators to capture contemporary dance on video, such as Bob Lockyer, producer of dance programmes at the BBC, who calls for a 'British Film and Dance Archive' stressing that 'New York has a great one. Paris does as well; there's a developing one in Australia; but still there's nothing in this country' (Lockyer 2000:41). Indeed, the need for and value of video archives of performances is felt by some to be such that it must be on a 'national' scale, with the associated implications of being grand, official, all-encompassing, and complete. As with the discourse and ideology of archives, a parallel with memory is inviting, with the perspective video archive becoming a replacement memory bank for the nation. In this manner a video archive is, for Lockyer, 'A Home for our Heritage'.

Like other forms of documentation, the video recording of live performance can serve many purposes: such as facilitating the creation and learning of new works, assisting memory, enabling the study of performance in academic institutions, and giving pleasure to potential audiences unable to see the live performance. Each of these various functions, however, shares the important similarity of enabling the continued representation of live performance in its own absence. For example, on the value of video to the researcher Varney and Fensham declare:

Video is a necessary and unnecessarily maligned aid to research; without it, performance disappears and we lose our history and our capacity to think through performance. (Varney and Fensham 2000:89)

While this statement of logical function is clear and unexceptional in itself, equally apparent is the now familiar and more problematic declaration that, without representation (here on video), ‘performance disappears and we lose our history.’ Alternatively, as Lockyer states, our national heritage must ‘be preserved before it is too late.’ Or according to Gay McAuley, ‘film and video recordings at least enable us to counter the ephemerality of the theatrical event’ (McAuley 1986:4). The basic function, beyond any subsequent use of video recordings, is again to fulfil the fundamental purpose of halting disappearance and saving performance.

In these discussions, ‘video’ refers to audio-visual recording using cameras and film, although within that definition a great range of technologies and techniques exist. Seen generally, however, the technological abilities of video recording – surface accuracy and apparent mechanical objectivity, capability to record sight and sound, space and time, along with economy, and ease of operation and access – make it a particularly powerful method of recording live performance. So, as technology, video recording is often perceived as ostensibly neutral, with the only issues being how and for what it is employed. The video recording of dance or theatre, therefore, would theoretically capture transparently the entire appearance of the performance. However, the surface attractions of this perspective warrant further investigation: are claims of transparency countered by the effects of media specificity and, crucially, is it possible for recorded video to represent *live* performance? Balanced across these points is another, more practical question: when does a video recording of a theatrical performance cease to be documentation and become an entity in its own right?

(b) Adaptation or Documentation

Still photographers, driven by the desire to capture movement as the essence of dance, have moved away from representing actual live performances and into the studio. Practitioners and theorists have been wary of making a similar transition with video, especially with theatre, which would involve recording for the camera, perhaps in the studio, in the attempt to capture a more essential imprint of the qualities of the performance. For with theatre on video a completely different discourse from that of documentation comes into play, the word 'adaptation' summing up how such projects enter an entirely new dramatic system. Even when their 'content' is largely similar, film and TV are considered different art forms from theatre, and rightly so: each being distinct media of presentation. Because film and video themselves present performances, this distinction between adaptation and documentation is essential, and much more challenging than that between representation and documentation in the non-performance medium of still photography. Once recorded, it is possible that audiences no longer see theatre as theatre but as video, film, or television.

Although unashamed proponents of adaptation abound, for many writing about the video recording of dance or theatre from a 'documentation' point of view the principle response to the adaptation/documentation dilemma is to insist categorically on video recordings being *of* live performances: that is of actual events, not recordings constructed from specially made-for-camera performances. McAuley, on this point, insists that 'A recording made in real time during a "live" performance clearly has a different documentary status from a performance done in takes exclusively for the cameras' (McAuley 1986:20). In addition, Annabelle Melzer writes:

The only limitation upon the documenting process that seems to me indisputable alongside varying intentions, is that the film be shot in performance, with or without an audience, *in the original setting* – that is, not shifted to a studio. The shift to a studio space seems to me the critical dividing line between

documentation and adaptation. Transferred from its original space, the performance must become, in its filmed version, an adaptation. (Melzer 1995a:152)

The motivation for such distinctions between adaptations and documentations are attempts to ensure authenticity, the principle behind which requires at least partial acceptance of the apparent mechanical neutrality of video (overlooking, as I will discuss, subtler yet inevitable consequences of media specificity). As with still photography, part of the allure of the video camera is that it is an apparently objective tool and, allowing programming and technological capabilities, it can be said to record faithfully whatever it is pointed at. The promise of video technology is the ability to capture all the 'levels' of a performance, from the script to the *mise-en-scène* and, as a dramatic medium in its own right, the performance itself. This is the documentary ideal, theoretically straight, direct, and unmediated: one shot, one camera, one frame. Adaptation compromises all these elements and casts suspicion on any documentary relationship, and in some practitioners this produces the instinct to insist on 'straight' documentary recordings.

The results of simply pointing a camera at a performance and recording it, however, often disappoint those employing the technology. The reasons for this initially appear to be technical problems, but they soon begin to reveal more serious conflicts of medium. The methods used to tackle the technical limitations, along with the language used to discuss the problems, quickly reveal how the video camera ceases to be a neutral transparency and becomes a defining and constructing medium, even when utilised in the name of documentation.

(c) The Selective Eye of the Video Camera

The technical problems are multiple and the disappointments are numerous. Mirroring the complaints made by still photographers about working in venues, those documenting performance on video frequently comment on poor lighting, loss of

detail, and static images. Bonnie Brooks, for example, discusses the problems and disappointments of video-recording dance, noting that videos of dance performances are often of such poor quality and so indistinct as to be little visual interest and useless for either commercial or research purposes. She relates how a festival director from San Francisco found difficulties in using video recordings of auditions:

as we looked at our notes and then at the tapes, we realized the limitations of what we were looking at, because often we couldn't see in the tapes what we had made enthusiastic notes about in the actual live auditions. The tapes weren't capturing what happened on stage (Brooks 2001a:www).

If one sees the problem simply in terms of technological capabilities then the answers are simple. Surely better lighting, faster film speeds, and higher resolutions solve the problems of making 'good' theatre documents also 'good' videos. This is perhaps the direction Brooks is heading when she notes the improvement of video recordings over the years, suggesting that recordings have improved in quality because choreographers have become increasingly aware of what the camera 'can and can't do'. But the implications of this technological coming-together need exploring: just as there exists a fear of notation transforming composition, should there be concern that video transforms performance through the desire to be recordable – to be videoable? As video-dance creator Douglas Rosenberg suggests, the video camera can have a coercive affect on what it films:

The camera can be an intrusive presence as it not only records but influences the dance and the dancer as well [...] The camera tends to exert a sort of authority that shapes a situation it intended to simply reveal or fix. (Rosenberg 2002:www)

Here, with the transformative impact of any form of recording, the technical problems of video recording reach to the heart of the problems of documenting performance. McAuley suggests that only certain theatrical signs are, in their nature, recordable with a video camera and that there is 'the danger that the cameraman's choices [as to what to record] will be more a function of what the camera can

conveniently record rather than a reflection of the theatrical functioning of the piece' (McAuley 1986:9). Nor is it always possible to distinguish between what are merely accidental results of better-or-worse technology and what are more essential characteristics of that technology. In rejecting the use of video recordings as a replacement for forms of dance notation, Ann Hutchinson Guest cites several pieces of research that suggest that learning from notation is quicker and more accurate than learning from video. While video gives an overall impression of the dance, it is far less clear about the details, with problems that edge between the accidental errors and inherent qualities of recording. C. Brook Andrews, who conducted research at George Washington University comparing video tape and Labanotation as learning tools for modern dance, suggests further explanations of the difficulties of learning from video. These include 'a distortion of depth, a tendency for images to appear overly large, a slowing down of the speed of movement and a reduction of movement dynamics' (Hutchinson Guest 1984:9-10). Edwin Denby also argues that many of the difficulties with video are inherent to the technology, listing among other problems how the camera foreshortens, distorts perspective, and presents a poor illusion of volume (Denby 1986:135). This risk – that a video recording of a performance is defined as 'good' by the specificities of the camera rather than its ability to communicate qualities of the original performance – certainly exists, perhaps unrecognised by many people attempting to improve techniques of video documentation.

Implicit in these arguments is the suggestion that there is such a thing as video-literacy, whereby viewers read the screen according to a learnt set of conventions and values. These are not necessarily rules inherent in video but rather established codes, including elements such as understanding the use of narrative, perspective, and editing. To make a recording that is 'good' as a video, these conventions have to be (largely) followed, regardless of whether they confirm with the codes established by the particular live performance being recorded. If read by the viewer according to the rules of video, then the recording can fundamentally subsume the original live performance. As Patrice Pavis writes, 'video-taping encourages us to elaborate a semiology of its own specificity, involving the

mediation of camera and of video filming in its capturing of meaning produced on the theatre stage' (Pavis 1982:123). Hence, the video documentation can become a work in its own right.

The recording of performance on video, therefore, does more than merely halt disappearance. Instead, like all representations, in the methods and interests of its presentation video also begins to constitute a distinct identity of its subject. That is, in the choices of *what* video records, in the manner *how* it records, and indeed in what it *can* record, the act of representation defines the live performance represented. In other words, the live performance represented on video (what is represented and how it is represented) is very different from the live performance represented in audience talk, photography, notation etc. Each is a discourse that constitutes the cultural perception of its subject in the act of representation. Significantly, for example, some of the ambitions motivating the video recording of live performances involve allowing access to the types of knowledge that only video enables. These elements exist largely in the technological attributes of video, including the ability to freeze-frame, to rewind and repeat, and to cross-reference. It is in this manner that video offers scholars an opportunity to bring performance into what Keir Elam terms 'systematic study': a position put even more exactly by theatre academic Ronald Argelander, who writes that

The most frustrating problem in studying theatre as performance (rather than as literature) is the lack of reliable or accurate visual material to work with. [...] This is particularly irritating when one thinks of the possibilities open to cinema scholars, who have the original performances available to them for examination. It seems clear that, unless similar kinds of visual material are made available to theatre historians, the study of theatre as performance has no future (Melzer 1995a:149).

The libraries of videotapes existing in academic institutions confirm the seduction Argelander presents of being able to see again and affirm memory. Argelander's remarks also echo those of Varney and Fensham, Potter, Geisekam, and Cousin

considered earlier on the importance of 'proper documentation' to ensure the future academic existence of performance. The implication is that through such video libraries and through the medium of video the study of theatre (and almost by implication its very cultural existence) retains a future that is otherwise disappearing. Although Argelander's comments at the very least overstate the issue, it is the case that much study of live performance is through the medium of video. Consequently, the necessary question is whether analysis through the technology of video can justifiably claim to provide analysis of the original performance. This question is particularly intriguing as the manner of analysis hoped for, essentially that of 'playback', is one intrinsic to video but intrinsically alien to live performance. Pavis recognises this conflict, aware of the appeal of the particular abilities of video recordings and of the ambiguities of those abilities:

The main advantage (but also the ambiguity) of video-taping is undoubtedly the possibility it has of stopping at one particular image, of repeating one particular sequence. We are back at that old day-dream of the theatre analyst who would like to be able to reflect at his leisure upon certain moments of the performance, by violating the dictate of the temporal uniqueness of the theatre event. (Pavis 1982:123)

Further emphasising problems such as these, McAuley argues that video is far from transparent, writing of the possibility of the recording medium interposing its own specificity on the recorded theatrical event (McAuley 1986:3). If one of the specificities is simply that of playback, then this process is inevitable. More generally, Belgian actor and journalist Marcelle Imhauser suggests of the video recording of theatre that 'The most perverse impact of television is to turn everything into television' (Imhauser 1988:97).

The practice and potential of the video recording of live performance balances somewhere between these two poles of either undermining medium-specificity or guaranteeing documentary existence. Video recording does have its own specificities and conventions that are not necessarily sympathetic to those of live performance.

However, any video recording, no matter how created, can also offer not to be disregarded documentation of vanished events. (How much would we pay, with acceptance of unlimited compromises, for a film of the first performance of *Oedipus Rex*?)

(d) Liveness on Tape

The issue is therefore apparent: to what extent is it possible to record *live* performance on tape? – a question that returns this discussion to the examination in Chapter One of the relationship between live and non-live performances. Much of that debate could be reiterated here, perhaps with suggestions that it is the physical presence of the performer that cannot be captured on film or that there is a ‘finished’ quality to the recorded medium that contrasts with the incomplete and present creation of live performance. Examples of arguments supporting the assessment that elements of liveness are lost on video are numerous. McAuley, for example, suggests that while the *mise-en-scène* is recordable ‘the performance itself, the physical experience, nightly renewed, the dangerous interaction with the living audience, all this belongs to the actor and cannot be recorded’ (McAuley 1986:22). Jonathan Miller emphasises the significance of temporal simultaneity, writing of video that ‘the space the spectator sits in does not articulate with the one in which the dramatic events occur’ (Miller 1986:63). Bernard Beckerman also stresses the importance of the participatory process in live performance, arguing that ‘the theatrical experience consists of the simultaneity of creation and reception’ (Beckerman 1979:161). In addition, Melzer notes the resilience of arguments supporting the importance of performance and audience presence. Among other examples, she repeats remarks Peter Zeisler, head of the Theatre Communications Group, made at a 1981 National Video Festival:

We need to examine the role of drama on video, because when you remove the audience, you no longer have theatre – you have lost the sense of danger of a live performance. (Melzer 1995b)

Together, these and other suggestions point towards the widespread perception that video cannot capture the experience of liveness on tape – a perception that I also find persuasive.

However, while video cannot perhaps literally record liveness (a contradiction between documentation and disappearance) perhaps it is possible for video to represent some elements of the experience of live performance. It is worth returning here to McAuley's statement regarding the danger of only recording what the camera can 'conventionally' record and Pavis' comment on how video recordings 'encourage' the viewer towards the established specificities of the medium. While certainly existing, such encouragements to conventionality are also worth actively resisting. It is instead worth considering more imaginative approaches to the video recording of live performance, even if they might first involve tearing-up much of the existing rulebook of video documentation. This could include considering more interventionist approaches that are not simply constructing supposedly transparent video documentations, nor seeking to adapt the material of the live performance (plot, action, or script) to create a new work of video art. Instead, would it not be possible to rework the live-performance event for the camera, perhaps in the studio, with the intention of somehow communicating the essential live elements on video? This would be a 'representation' of essential substance, not surface 'documentation' of appearances.

Making the beginnings of such constructive re-imagining of what video can do, theatre researcher Marco de Marinis stresses the importance of not allowing the recording of a live performance to become a 'surrogate' show (de Marinis 1985:386). Possible methods he proposes to ensure the secondary condition of the video recording, and hence represent the live performance, revolve around maintaining the visibility of the recording medium; in particular, he suggests the construction of partial and intentionally awkward recordings that deliberately resist attempts to read it as 'video'. By making the recording medium as evident as possible, the spectator will never be able to forget that they are watching a documentation of another event

and not experiencing a work in its own right. This ambition removes video representations from attempts to assert authoritative objectivity and provides it with a very different role than that suggested by Sontag's presentation of film as a transparency. It also echoes the suggestions I have made with regards to the practice of other representations of live performance: whether inviting the viewer to imaginatively read movement into still photographs; stressing the indeterminacy and inevitable inclusion of chance in notation; or drawing attention to the accidental and incomplete compilation of archives. Such an endeavour might look a little like Chris Nash's still photography, borrowing techniques of blurring, montage, and deforming colour, joined with video elements such as inter-cut sound and layered or multiple images. As an example of such contrasting possibilities, Appendix Three examines a number of representations (including two video presentations) of a single production, comparing the employment of straight 'documentary' approaches with more interventionist techniques that make the representational medium evident.

Also interesting here is Douglas Rosenberg's concept of 'screendance', especially his suggestion that dance on film is a site-specific practice in 'which the camera may be thought of as the site' (Rosenberg 2000:www). Although Rosenberg is not interested in representing live performances, instead constructing entirely new dance works for the camera, the possibility of equating dancers' occupation of stage space directly to their occupation of the space of the screen is intriguing. Without the same concerns of theatre practitioners, where work made for the camera is automatically subsumed into pre-existing forms of film or television drama, much interesting work has been done in 'screendance'. One interesting example is Merce Cunningham's collaborations with filmmaker Charles Atlas, such as their 1979 work *Locale* where the camera moves around the stage almost as if it is one of the dancers.

Although such projects do not seek to record live performances, I believe that similar innovative techniques could be employed to represent dance and theatre performances on video. Resisting conventional and prescribed effects, such techniques would allow viewers to see the recording as a representation and not according to established conventions of film or television.

In this chapter, I have shown how a desire to halt the disappearance of live performance constructs a discourse of documentation that often credits methods of representation with either a mechanical authenticity (photography, video) or other cultural authority (archive, notation). By deliberately seeking to bring the limitations of such claims to the forefront of the representation, I believe that the absent live performance will become more visible. As theatre and film writer Richard Kalisz suggests with video documentations, 'The choices made for the shot scales and the montage should indicate to us that the original work is different from its reproduction, encouraging us to think over what is missing, that is to say the live performance which remains absent' (Kalisz 1988:80). Instead, of surface documentation the primary function of such video representations is to communicate something of the value and qualities perceived in the original performance. Significant (although not exclusive) among these would be liveness.

The fundamental dilemma of video is, therefore, whether the practices of representation are determined by what is considered valuable and worth documenting, or are instead defined by what is documentable. It seems to me that any representation must highlight the values of the original performance, with the primary function not merely that of conservation but the furthering of communication, analysis, and the discourses surrounding the performance. To be worthwhile, I would suggest that live-performance representations must communicate the perceived value of live performance: a value that this thesis argues is produced by the experience of liveness. In this chapter, I have made tentative suggestions or presented some practical examples as to how to archive this communication of value in representations of different media. The following chapters look at the written representation of live performance in the journalistic review, taking a similarly descriptive, analytical, and evaluative approach to considerations of how live performance is represented in language – also speculating as to how language could potentially represent liveness. Is it possible for the particular nature of live performance to be at the core of written representations as it is at the core of the audience experience?

Chapter Four: Reviewing Live Performance

Part One: The Review

The previous chapters have brought together two elements that continue to form the basis of this thesis. The first is that, since its associated discourses constitute cultural perceptions and valuations about an object or experience in the world, asking *how* such discourses represent their subject is a legitimate method of enquiring as to what something is. The second is that representations of live performance in various media are exactly such ‘constituting’ discourses, which make manifest cultural perceptions of live performance. So, how society represents live performance makes audience experiences visible in discourse and can enable us to establish what liveness crucially is as a cultural phenomenon. Chapters Two and Three examined representations of live performance as a method of furthering the investigation into perceptions of liveness begun in Chapter One. This chapter will discuss the written journalistic review as a further discourse that in representing also constitutes live performance. It examines the relationship between our definitions of liveness and the representation of the live in the language of reviews. The discussion utilises the contemporary cultural perceptions of liveness identified in previous chapters as a point of evaluation and ideas of phenomenology and linguistics as methods of analysis.

Such description, analysis, and evaluation of the representation of the live in language is supplemented later in the chapter by suggestions as to how language best embodies the spatial presence and temporal uniqueness of live performance. I have previously suggested that our ambition should be to manifest the experience of liveness in its representations. In reviews, therefore, the particular nature of live performance should, I think, be at the core of the written representation as it is at the core of the audience experience. Hence, as well as asking how reviewing as it now

exists represents live performances, I shall also speculate as to how it might better articulate liveness.

Limitations of Study

Since the interest of this chapter is the articulation of the experience of liveness in written language, its scope could legitimately include any written descriptions of live performances: letters, diary entries, scholarly articles, monographs, reviews. From this range of possibilities, I concentrate exclusively on the journalistic review (by which I mean written consideration of performances as published today in mass-circulation newspapers) because of its brief, direct, and immediate focus on (typically) a single performance. More than the other instances of written discourse, the review is directly about live performances; one of its primary functions is to present the performance to readers who were not there. It is accordingly the most legitimate area of study in terms of direct representational qualities. This chapter, therefore, will examine the status of the review in contemporary culture, along with close textual readings of actual reviews.

Of course, the review serves many other purposes apart from representing performances, and any analysis of language use must account for these additional functions. The discussion will therefore run in two parts: the first explicitly asking what a review is, considering its form, status, and purpose and asking how these affect the language employed. To a certain extent this discussion is a detour away from direct consideration of issues of liveness, but it is necessary because the form and function of the review has a direct impact on how it can represent live performance. The second part of this chapter then looks directly at the representational function of reviews, particularly at descriptions of performances, and considers how the review represents its subject in language. Throughout, I consider various discussions of reviewing, particularly from reviewers themselves, drawn from 1945 to today. However, when providing actual examples of reviewing in practice, the focus is exclusively on the last two decades. This will allow the

examination to work on a manageable scale, not asking what the review is for all time and for all people, but what the review is here and now.

Indeed, as a tool of enquiry this chapter focuses on what the review is, and how it writes its subject in language, in relation to just one particular instance. Throughout, detailed analysis and illustration is in relation to one production: *India Song*, written by Marguerite Duras, directed by Ivo van Hove, and performed by Het Zuidelijk Toneel at the 1999 Edinburgh International Festival. In this test case, I examine the English language press coverage of the production, a total of eight journalistic reviews, provided with identifying codes for ease of reference:

Rupert Christiansen, *The Daily Telegraph*, 2 September 1999 (Review IS1)

Neil Cooper, *The Times*, 2 September 1999 (Review IS2)

Mark Fisher, *The Herald*, 1 September 1999 (Review IS3)

Alison Freebalm, *The Stage*, 9 September 1999 (Review IS4)

Alastair Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 2 September 1999 (Review IS5)

Joyce McMillan, *The Scotsman*, 1 September 1999 (Review IS6)

Gabe Stewart, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 1 September 1999 (Review IS7)

Sue Wilson, *The Independent*, 4 September 1999 (Review IS8)

The eight reviews examined stand as a sample of the current status of the review in the United Kingdom. I draw illustrations and arguments from intensely focused analysis of these reviews, with a particularly detailed consideration of their descriptive content. Subsequently, Chapter Five will extend out from this intense focus, applying the conclusions and theories reached here to consideration of a wider range of reviews. Appendix Three, 'Documents of *India Song*', complements this chapter by discussing various documentations (still photographs, video, and multi-media) of the production. Appendix Four reproduces the full text of these eight reviews.

What is a Review?

(a) Form

Of the eight *India Song* reviews, four are from national UK broadsheet newspapers, two from national Scottish broadsheet papers, one from a fortnightly trade paper, and one from a local Edinburgh evening paper. These newspapers publish reviews because their editors believe that their readers are interested in reading about live performances. In some cases, there are more specific reasons for publication: the *Evening News* does not review performances outside of Edinburgh; *The Stage* is dedicated more or less exclusively to covering the arts. In the six other instances, however, the reviews exist as part of a policy of general reporting on matters of interest, representing the typical relationship between reviews and newspapers.

There is today a general perception that in recent decades newspapers have marginalised the arts (for example, Herbert 1999:242), a belief particularly held by reviewers themselves, such as Jonathan Kalb (reviewer for *The Village Voice*) who has charted the shrinking size of the review in the American press (Kalb 1993:167). In a more accommodating past, Kalb claims that George Bernard Shaw could ‘spend 1000 words comparing two actresses’ complexions.’ By such comparison, each of the *India Song* reviews is indeed brief, ranging from 200 words (the *Evening News* and *The Stage*) to 600 (the *Financial Times*). At the lower end of the range, this is perhaps short by any standards; however, at the upper end, it does not represent a significant difference in length with the reviews of Edwin Denby in the 1940s and Kenneth Tynan in the 1950s. Whatever the exact or relative length, an important characteristic of all reviewing is that it is easily readable in a single sitting and not an extended discourse.

As well as their tendency to brevity, there are other distinct characteristics about the circumstances of the production and publication of reviews, which are again typified by these eight examples. In each instance, newspapers published the *India Song* reviews soon after the performance seen by the reviewer, most while the production was still open to the public. (The reviews were printed between September 1–9; the

production ran from August 31–September 4.) In three cases, papers published the reviews the morning after the first performance and in three additional instances the reviews appeared two mornings after the first performance. Finally, all the reviews consider the production of *India Song* alone and are specifically (and largely exclusively) about the production. Together, these points regarding the physical appearance and circumstances of publication describe the typical status of the journalistic review in general. A review is brief, often written at short notice, with an immediate topical time reference, a single subject, and is published as a distinct and particular entity. Such circumstances inevitably begin to dictate content. Space, time, and frame of reference are limited, leaving little room for abstract thought or large schemes of comparison. Rather the review focuses on a single production, describing, interpreting, and evaluating that production on its own merits.

The eight illustrative reviews fit this description well: almost all focusing closely and with little deviation on a single performance of a single play. Form prescribes content: these reviews are exclusively about *India Song*. The interesting question is whether the physical form of these reviews, and the particular circumstances of their publication, have had identifiable and characteristic effects upon their style of language and writing. That the practical constrictions of the form of the journalistic review may well have a significant effect on both content and style is a point made by many reviewers. Indeed, in *One Night Stands* Michael Billington, theatre reviewer for *The Guardian*, writes that ‘one’s role is partly defined by a set of pragmatic circumstances: the paper one writes for, the amount of space, the length of one’s deadline’ (Billington 1994:xii). Of these, it is often the demands imposed by brevity of space that receive most comment. Kalb again:

Space pressure makes you mean, makes you put things in severer terms that you’d prefer, makes you express opinions backed by insufficient description. (Kalb 1993:166)

Similar observations suggest that space (and time) restrictions have an impact not just on the language of reviewing but also on the opinions expressed by reviewers.

Certainly, deadline restraints can be harsh: the demand of publication deadlines can mean that reviewers must submit copy in very short time, particularly during occasions such as festivals. In some instances, the maximum possible period between the performance finishing and the printing of the next day's papers is five hours. Consequently, if Kalb highlights the limitations of space, Gordon Rogoff, formerly a reviewer for the same paper, *The Village Voice*, points out the pressures imposed by time:

the overnight deadline demands a quickly engineered response, a punching bag style, swift and unequivocal judgement matched by easy-come adjectives that just as easily avoid ambiguity and resonance. (Rogoff 1985:133)

Pavis makes similar observations, particularly considering style, in his consideration of the press coverage of Peter Brook's *Measure for Measure* in Paris in 1978, remarking that 'The articles often conclude with a paradox, an expression of regret, a metaphor or witty punch line' (Pavis 1982:104). The *India Song* reviews reveal numerous examples of these kind of elements, including punch-bag style, easy-come adjectives, and perhaps overly stringent condemnation. Illustrations of all these, and of pithy and clever remarks owing more to linguistics-games, puns, and 'style' than the desire to communicate anything to the reader, are easily located:

[T]he supposedly oriental smells wafting into the auditorium reminded me of nothing more exotic than Johnson's floor polish. (IS1)

[Het Zuidelijk Toneel's previous productions] were pretentious anatomy lessons; the plays themselves were corpses laid out cold upon van Hove's dissecting slab. (IS5)

[The plot] sounded like Ghandi meets The English Patient (IS7)

What determines such approaches is probably a mixture of editorial or house styles, the pressures of deadlines, and space restrictions. Although I present the comments

above in isolation, even if read in full the reviews rarely provide enough evidence or material for the reader to test or otherwise evaluate the judgement expressed so firmly by the reviewer. This is what Kalb describes as 'insufficient description': sharply worded and perhaps stylish evaluations that do not represent the performance but present a supposedly absolute (and unquestionable) judgement upon the performance. Such formulations, I would argue, are examples of intrinsically bad practice in reviewing, not only because they present themselves as absolute but also because they are lead by linguistic reflex (the over-used metaphor, the flippant retort etc) rather than by careful thought. Although this practice is not limited to negative comment – the cliché 'impossible to forget' (IS6) being an example of similarly formulaic and unreflective praise – I would suggest that the *India Song* reviews demonstrate a much stronger shared rhetoric of 'knocking copy', perhaps inevitably reviewers with a positive response being more thoughtful and individualistic about how they express themselves. As Ivor Brown, formerly theatre reviewer at *The Observer* notes: 'it is easy to approach a play with a sour quip, ready-made joke, or cutting remark but they are no substitute for truly considered writing' (Fry 1952:36).

The short production time for many of the reviews, therefore, can be potentially significant in terms of content and style. However, it is possible to over-stress the significance of time restrictions, particularly with Sunday papers where almost a week can pass between performance and publication deadline. Indeed, Robert Brustein, a New York reviewer, suggests that while all the practical restrictions that Rogoff and Kalb describe certainly exist, reviewers are usually extremely unwilling to admit that such factors have any effect on their work. In particular, Brustein argues that most reviewers would not admit that their impressions of a play might change over time, fearing that to do so might reveal the 'less than scientific' nature of reviewing (Brustein 1989:192). To add two further perspectives to this debate: another American critic, Harold Clurman, pointedly remarks the reviewer 'infrequently has more to say about a play after a week's reflection than he said immediately after the performance' (Clurman 1994:511); and Arlene Croce, of *The New Yorker*, argues that the short production time of reviews can actually be beneficial. 'For the dance critic it is best to write as soon after the event as possible',

she suggests, in order to retain a fresh and vibrant memory and convey the ‘real substance of what went on’ (Croce 1978:ix). Billington also reflects on this debate, drawing up a list of writers ‘for’ the over-night review (such as C.E. Montague), and those ‘against’ (such as Arnold Bennett). Billington himself recognises the immediacy that Croce describes but finally sides with Bennett:

The overnight review can pin down the exhilaration or the outrage of the moment, but it can also lead to flush excitability and often militates against innovation [... T]hings often look different by the sober light of dawn. (Billington 1994:xii-xiii)

There is no single resolution to this matter, which is clearly differently located for each individual reviewer. And while Billington is to a certain extent right that ‘form dictates function’ in terms of space, deadline, content, and style, it is not always clear in practice how reviewing might alter, given the opportunities of greater space and time. For example, Ian Herbert, founder editor of the *Theatre Record*, suggests that there has been no noticeably greater evidence of contemplation or improvement in style as a result of the gradual disappearance of the overnight review over the last two decades. (Herbert 1999:242). In the *India Song* reviews, additionally, while the different readership of the *Evening News* as a local paper is clear in the reviewer’s style, there is otherwise little major variation in writing or approach between reviews – and significantly, no noticeable differences between the dailies and Sundays, or between the longest and shortest examples. Indeed, while reviewers’ complaints about the circumstances of their writing are understandable, it is debatable whether they describe effects symptomatic of all reviewing or merely bad reviewing. What seems more likely is that the complaints portray how restrictions in time and space make the task of reviewing more challenging. Consequently, linguistic short-cuts, clichés, and over-harshness are temptations, far easier than producing considered copy written to a deadline and word count. The examples I provided from *India Song* are illustrations of the results of such temptations, prompted by the circumstances of form and production, but not the inevitable state of reviewing.

While time restrictions exist, therefore, they are not an excuse for bad practice, and while space limitations undoubtedly do impose physical restraints on the writer, they should not and need not determine style. Hence, I believe that the form of the review, dictated by the characteristic circumstances of production and publication, does not determine the nature of reviewing. Additionally, it is worth considering that this form is the physical reflection of the function of the review. For surely one of the essential qualities of the review is its temporal near-proximity to its subject: the fact that its composition, publication, and (initial) reading are close in time to the performance. Length similarly seems to manifest this immediate relationship with the performance, the ability to read a review quickly almost providing it with a performative element of its own. To change these elements would be to change one of the defining functions of the review, and alter how they are 'used' by readers. Instead, therefore, is it perceptions of the function of reviewing that have, or should have, a more significant impact in guiding content and language?

(b) Function

In terms of function (and subsequently content and style), it is primarily significant that reviews are published and written *as* reviews. In each case, the *India Song* reviews appear on a dedicated arts page, labelled 'Arts' or 'Reviews', or even in a dedicated arts supplement. The reviewer's by-line also accompanies each review. Although the papers carry no overt indications as to how the review is different from any other section of the paper, it is clear that the review appears as a distinctive and known entity. The circumstances of production that I have discussed, and the form of the review, are the consequences of its status (and function) as a review; form is the result of function. Exactly what this function is, therefore, needs further investigation.

The labelling of the review as the work of the reviewer is the first and most obvious indication of the status and function of reviews. It is also significant in directing how readers should respond to them. Reviewers' by-lines label the piece not only as

written by them but also as being their opinion. Additionally, by appearing in print the review immediately becomes more than just one audience member's opinion, although unhappy artists often dismiss reviews as such. Instead, the review immediately obtains an authority, the reviewer takes on the status of an expert, and the review becomes something worth reading. This authority is not necessarily dependent on the by-line carrying a name, with a great deal of criticism historically headed, for example, 'from our drama critic'. Indeed, the *Times Literary Supplement* did not completely abandon anonymous reviewing until 1974. Here, the authority of the review derives from that of the paper it appears in, and indeed from simply appearing in print at all. Hans Keller, in his condemnation of music criticism, calls this 'the black magic of the printed word, which lends authority where there is no authority, interest where there is no interest, power where there is no force' (Keller 1987:191). Illustrating the practical experience of something similar, Joan Cass, dance reviewer on the *Boston Herald* and *Dance Observer*, describes how she realised that the appearance her own work in print confers an automatic air of authority on the opinions she expresses:

The printed word has a powerful authority. I have found myself reading dance reviews in the morning newspaper, with respectful attention, despite the fact that I, the writer, knew I left the concert hall the previous evening uncertain of my opinions. (Cass 1970:225)

Despite all the limitations and possible shortcomings behind their production, therefore, once in print the review obtains, for better or worse, a semblance of stability and firmness of opinion. In this manner, the review is clearly 'criticism' and possesses a certain authority and prestige. Similarly, the reviewer is a critic, defined simply as someone who expresses opinions and makes judgmental evaluations.

The live-performance reviewer, however, is a critic concerned with a particular occasion. This is significant, as the journalistic review is included in a newspaper because it is new. All news is concerned with things that are new – occasions or

events – and reviewers report upon performances much as journalists report upon news stories. The importance of topicality leads directly to the imposition of time restraints on the reviewer: temporal immediacy is central to the form and function of reviews. However, that the reviewer is also a critic represents a major difference between reviewer and reporter. To news is added personal opinion and evaluation in a much more obvious measure than in ‘straight’ news-reporting. As a result, rather than being purely news or purely criticism the review is located somewhere between the two.

As a piece of reportage concerning a particular occasion (as is the case with each of the *India Song* reviews), a review is typically an exercise in ‘critique’ rather than critical abstraction or elaborated theory. Indeed, it is possible to argue that reviewing has been untouched by any developments of twentieth-century theory regarding the purpose, nature, or ideals of arts criticism (Krauss 1981:26). In live-performance reviewing, as far as it is possible to tell, this is probably true. However, this is not to say that reviewing is criticism practised without thought or theory. Instead, I would suggest that, although the review rarely has conscious theory behind it, instead it possesses a framework of tradition and models of ‘common practice’ guiding its production. In some partial exceptions, additionally, reviews clearly do demonstrate conscious evidence of ‘theory’. This includes the aggressively descriptive criticism (especially of dance) advocated by followers of Sontag (Banes 1994:24-26, Copeland 1993:26-31 and Copeland 1998:101-102) that I will discuss in detail later. Musicologist Peter Kivy also notes an anti-interpretative vein in modern music criticism, with emphasis placed instead on description and technical analysis (Kivy 1993:296-316).

However, in a majority of cases, instead of conscious critical theory it is the review’s status as a review that directs the nature of reviewing. The appearance of the review is determined in part by the circumstances of its production and publication but also by perceptions as to its function. Particularly for the reader, the review as reportage always ties the form closely into its functionality. Similarly, the explicit comments of reviewers about their work often highlight function as the guiding principle of their

writing. This does not mean, however, that the review is not subject to competing demands and contradictory expectations. Indeed, in 1974 *The Drama Review* asked five prominent reviewers about their work and found each expressing different beliefs regarding the role and responsibilities of reviewing (Searle 1974:5-9). Additionally, looking at the *India Song* coverage (again standing in as exemplars of contemporary reviews) it is difficult to determine any clear fixed perceptions as to their function. Instead, these reviews suggest that the function of reviewing is often ambiguous and multiple. However, it is possible to divide perceptions of function into categories of evaluation, interpretation, and description.

(1) Evaluation

The status of the review is located somewhere between reportage and criticism, positions that also mark the competing demands on its function: whether to report or to evaluate. Of these, it is the 'critical' expression of personal opinion that is often the more apparent function. As such the purpose of the review is for the 'critic' to make an evaluation of the performance. Indeed, for some the very definition of reviewing is its evaluative function, though this need not imply any simple 'it's a hit' or 'it's a miss' awarding of marks for merit or demerit. For example, Clive Barnes, former dance writer at *The Times* and *New York Times*, declares 'I think it's merely the expression of [the reviewer's] own taste that is important' (Searle 1974:5). Indeed, an interesting suggestion is Clement Greenberg's argument that it is impossible to write about art without being evaluative, as the very idea of what art is implies a judgement of value (Greenberg 1981:36).

The frequency and explicit nature of evaluations in many reviews seems to corroborate in practice that this is the purpose, the definition even, of reviewing. For example, in almost every one of the *India Song* reviews, it is possible to identify a clear sentence or phrase where the reviewer states his or her overall evaluation of the performance:

This astonishing piece of theatre is not just without precedent, it's as if the director, Ivo van Hove, has reinvented the wheel. (IS3)

Disorientation and amazement go hand in hand during Ivo van Hove's brilliant production of Marguerite Duras' *India Song*. (IS4)

[*India Song*] is so dull and anti-theatrical that it is difficult to keep one's mind on it in the theatre, let alone recall it afterwards. (IS5)

These extracts all have a number of things in common. All of them are direct statements and they all occur at or near the beginning of the review, before providing the reader with any other material or information. They all also occupy unambiguous positions of opinion: two are 'raves' and one is a complete condemnation.

Remembering the comments I looked at earlier on how the production process of reviewing can determine the style of the resulting copy, one might deduce that the punch-bag style of these explicit evaluations is the result of habit produced by circumscribed time and space limits. These evaluative statements appear most central and vital to the reviews' existence. The articulation of evaluation appears to be the very pretext of reviewing.

One function of the review is, therefore, to communicate the opinions of the reviewer (as critic) about the performance. When related to the performing arts, however, the role of evaluation in reviewing is far from abstract. Instead, it has an additional and immediate function: for the reviewer passes topical judgements, which can have a direct and current impact on the performance discussed. Published as news, almost all the *India Song* reviews appeared while the production was still running.

Consequently, the evaluative judgements reached by reviewers were immediately relevant to the public reputation of the performance. Once expressed in a review, reviewers' opinions are in part a question of whether they would recommend the performance to their readers (accepting potentially more complex relationships between individual readers and reviewers). Inevitably, therefore, one of the primary

purposes of the review is to inform newspaper readers of productions that they should (or should not) go and see for themselves.

Certainly, this is the reason why publicity departments provide free press tickets, for the review performs an important role in the publicising of productions. Put simply, live-performance companies need to sell tickets to exist. Indeed, John Elsom writes, in his introduction to *Post-War British Theatre Criticism*, that the daily/weekly reviewers 'are not to be valued for their opinions but for their impact upon trade' (Elsom 1981:1) and from the viewpoint of a venue manager or company director one would be inclined to agree with him. This is something relevant for all the arts, although some observers perhaps rightly suggest that the connection is especially tense with live performance. For example, John Booth suggests in *The Critic, Power, and the Performing Arts*: 'It is in theatre where, within hours, destinies can be shaped by the nature of critical reception' (Booth 1991:28). Elsewhere stories frequently surface of New York critics' power to close a performance in a matter of days.

On occasions, the *India Song* reviews illustrate this direct and immediate relationship between the review and the production of live performance. In two instances reviewers directly address Festival organisers and articulate demands as to what kind of theatre the director should programme:

Several phrases come to mind when contemplating this year's Edinburgh Festival drama programme, drearily pretentious and barking mad being prominent among them. Audiences have responded by staying away in droves, and the critics have been distinctly down in the mouth [...] Might I suggest [...] the odd comedy [and] some late-night cabaret (IS1)

Review IS5 repeats this style of prescriptive comment, representing the attempt at direct intervention in the programming of productions. These are explicit statements by reviewers as to what kind of art should exist and what should not. Alongside remarks such as these, all the reviews contain both direct and indirect expressions of evaluation, passing judgement on the play, the actors, the directors, and the

producers. Hence, because of its temporal (and financial) immediacy to the performance, any critical evaluation in a review can also assume an important economic factor and a function in the very production of live performance.

One result of the evaluative element of reviews is, therefore, to act as purportedly independent recommendation: something which may help (or hinder) ticket sales. However, a more elevated interpretation is to see this same function as part of the writer's duty not only to inform but also to educate the reader. Prominent among such ideas is the statement that the critic is 'gatekeeper' to the arts. Booth, for example, suggests that the reviewer as gatekeeper assumes, or is otherwise allocated, responsibility for maintaining high standards in the arts (Booth 1991:160). The reviewer is the arbiter of what is good and what is bad, and governs the initial status of new works in the cultural canon. Wesley Shrum expresses a similar idea, arguing that reviewers as 'taste makers and gatekeepers' are part of a system that seeks to 'grant knowledgeability a role in the ascription of quality' (Shrum Jnr 1996:96). Art market research reveals that such perception of art as already arbitrated by others is indeed the experience of some young audience members – although this respondent does not have the authority of critics in mind:

It's like you have to do a crash course in developing taste [...] You either swallow your parents' or teachers' opinions or have to develop opinions of your own, but you have to develop them along certain lines. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:14)

For artists, such potential pre-mediation of responses can be a matter of concern: their work not experienced directly but filtered by the opinions of 'experts'.

Playwright John Clifford, for example, suggests that audiences can become 'vitiated' by critics:

It is not critics themselves that are to blame; more the inner insecurities, the lack of faith in one's own taste and judgement, that causes their [the critics] opinions to be so uncritically believed. (Clifford 2000:65)

The relationship between individuals and the perceived authority of 'taste makers' is clearly subtle and I would not be as pessimistic as Clifford in seeing critical opinions as always uncritically accepted by audiences. Although it is possible, as John Dewey suggests, that this is an accumulative dependency, and that 'an audience that is itself habituated to being told [may come to] like to be told' (Dewey 1934:300).

However, performing artists and their supporting publicity departments are not neutral players in this relationship. While artists may complain about the power of the reviewer, they also seek to utilise that power to increase ticket sales. Indeed the relationship between reviews and marketing is easily blurred. Michael Billington, for example, relates how he was once introduced at a Disney press junket as 'the critic who didn't like *The Lion King*' (Billington 2000) as if such independence of thought was a betrayal of all the good work done by the publicity team. Today all reviews (as all reviewers are aware) are potentially part of the publicity process. Hence, the position the review has within the economic life of its subject is extremely significant and must play a fundamental part in readers' perceptions of the review. One consequence of this is the selective transformation of review into publicity quote: something even shorter, even more quasi-authoritative, and even more defined by the expression of value judgement. The review as publicity quote, additionally, renders only positive evaluations of interest, as, of course, the reason publicity departments use review-quotations is in the belief that they will help sell tickets. For example, from the *India Song* reviews, it would be easily possible to imagine the following extracted for promotional purposes and front-of-house display boards:

This astonishing piece of theatre (IS3)

the effect is electrifying (IS3)

Strong, beautiful and bold, and impossible to forget (IS6)

The Scotsman published the last extract the morning following the first night of *India Song* and it is difficult to overestimate its value in selling tickets for the remainder of the run. This reviewer, additionally, must have been very aware of the potential for

her readers to see the performance: sales of *The Scotsman* increase dramatically over the summer for this very reason.

However, it is difficult to see a direct link between the function of reviewers' evaluations in performance promotion and their style, language, or even simple occurrence. For example, *The Stage* published the equally potentially quotable remark 'Ivo van Hove's brilliant production' (IS4) several days after the Festival run had finished. Putting aside any possible future European performances, *The Stage* reviewer was writing for a readership that, by definition, could never see the performance. While this review could still have an impact in terms of future of the company and general perception of the Festival, its function of selling tickets was already obsolete. Yet it is impossible to detect in the language or content of these two reviews any fundamental distinctions based upon this difference in function. Perhaps this is in part because reviewers are not explicitly writing as part of the publicity process, this being instead a potential function rather than an original intention. Alternatively, it is possible that the 'genre' of reviewing (of which evaluation is a significant part) is accepted to such an extent that the review changes little in different circumstances of publication. Indeed, it seems clear that reviewers draw few distinctions between addressing readers as potential audiences in fact (i.e. who actually could choose to see the play) and as people who could only ever be audiences by proxy of the reviewer. To me this suggests that even when evaluating, the reviewer has a responsibility to represent the performance to the reader, thereby allowing them to 'see' the performance through the writing, something I will consider in detail when looking at the descriptive content of reviews.

(2) Interpretation

The reviewer, therefore, operates somewhere between the art, the performance, and its actual, potential, and theoretical 'audiences'. This is a position that Clive Barnes recognises:

I think a critic is trying to build a bridge between the two, that he's trying to help the artist by helping the public understand him. (Searle 1974:7)

Here, Barnes suggests that reviewers, positioned between the artist and the audience, have responsibilities to both: with a primary responsibility of aiding communication and understanding between the two. There is a subtle distinction here between Barnes' description of the reviewer as 'bridge' and the idea of the reviewer as 'gatekeeper' or 'taste maker' that I looked at earlier. Although both maintain the idea of the review as speaking for the art, there is a change of emphasis from evaluation to interpretation: from judging to bridging.

The interpretative mode most frequently presented in the *India Song* reviews is one that literally seeks to adopt a voice explaining to the reader the intentions of the director or playwright. The reviewer seeks to describe the theatrical technique used and then suggests its significance. For example, several of the reviews discuss the fact that the play is staged with the dialogue (and stage directions) pre-recorded and relayed over loudspeakers:

In the script, no word is spoken in view of the audience, the action being described by offstage voices, a technique used to emphasise the onstage torpor. (IS3)

The separation, for the most part, of the actors from the dialogue seems intended to imply their powerlessness in the face of larger, destructive forces (IS8)

In these examples, the reviewers discuss the stage effect and then make suggestions as to its significance, directly acting as Barnes' bridge between artists and audience, helping the audience understand what they see as the artist's intention. However, illustrating the thinness of the line between interpretation and evaluation, most of the reviewers also add a brief comment as to whether they consider the effect to be successful or not. This appears to be based on the age-old critical assumption that 'good' art is that in which artists fulfil their intention, which seems to thereby require

the reviewer to first discover the intention and then assess how successfully it has been realised. Noting this critical reflex in her own work, dance reviewer Deborah Jowitt is far more self-reflective about its use than many writers. In a review of the Nederlands Dans Theatre she writes:

[Choreographer Glen] Tetley works very skilfully at preparing the audience for the first live naked body, so skilfully he almost achieves the reverse of what he intended. (Who knows what he intended? Typical shoddy critic-talk ...) (Jowitt 1977:40)

As Jowitt notes, interpretation grounded on such 'intentionalism' is the result of clichéd or lazy writing, which, perhaps, is in turn prompted by restrictions of time and space. In the *India Song* reviews, even when not based on intentionalism, it is often impossible to tell whether reviewers make interpretations on the grounds of taste, of technique, of tradition, or of form. Additionally, it soon becomes impossible in some cases to distinguish between interpretative and evaluative modes:

Their disembodied voices, artificially amplified and re-directed, drone flatly, as if Duras's words bored the hell out of them. The threads of Duras's narrative become wholly obscure. Which man is which? Who is this heroine, Anne-Marie Stretter, anyway? Who cares? (IS5)

As well as interpreting stage effects, the reviewers also suggest overall interpretations. They offer readings as to what the playwright intended, what the characters are like, what their emotions represent, what the play symbolises, what allegories are present, what it means. The structure of these interpretative speculations usually leads out from a specific element of the performance, staging, or text, to generalisation. They range from the psychological to the philosophic:

Theirs is a passion of unconsummated desires that see the Vice-Consul driving himself into an obsessive frenzy as Anne-Marie moves passively around the men, who seem to be the only things giving her life meaning. (IS2)

But always, Van Hove shares the central preoccupation of Duras's text, which has to do with the confrontation between a Western culture based on "masculine" ideas about action, control, order, and an Indian culture based on passivity, fatalism, acceptance of human life as part of a huge organic cycle of decay and rebirth. (IS6)

This last illustration is from *The Scotsman*: the only review where the critic is primarily (or even significantly) interpretative. It is the only instance where other elements – evaluation, contextualisation, or digression – do not dominate the review. (Interestingly this interpretative scope comes in an example published the morning after the first-night performance, suggesting that limited time alone is no restriction on producing a carefully thought-out review.)

One recurring element in the *India Song* reviews, whether performing interpretation or evaluation, is the opacity of the opinions they express. The following quotations, for example, contain interpretations and evaluation of the performance:

The moment the eyes of the Vice-Consul and the French Ambassador's wife's met should have been electric. Yet the most sensual spark of the evening came from van Hove's rubbing and rapping of an Indian clay percussive pot. (IS7)

On the page [*India Song*] might look profound; in the theatre, it seemed self-absorbed and self-indulgent, coloured by some purple prose rendered into rather plodding English by Barbara Bray. (IS1)

Each of these examples centres on a particular aspect of the production – one a specific moment, the other a textual device – and are therefore to a certain extent grounded and specific. However, while unambiguous in their statements (evaluation and interpretation are clear) the above extracts are entirely ambiguous in their meaning. Neither in the extracts nor in the review as a whole do the reviewers substantiate their statements. They provide no information as to why the play is

self-indulgent or why the exchange of glances was not electric, and, as such, the statements are largely uninformative. In contrast, I would suggest that reviews should seek to exemplify such statements through descriptive representations of the performance; in particular, through representation to the reader of how such statements are prompted by the experience of the performance as a live performance. As I suggested earlier, there are perhaps the time-and-space induced pressures to deliver snap judgements backed by insufficient or non-existent description. In the eight sample reviews (and I would suggest more widely in contemporary reviewing) it is all too often impossible for readers to work through the reviewers' interpretative positions for themselves, or, alternatively, reach a different understanding of their own from the information given.

(3) Description

In contrast, a review offering not just judgement or interpretation but also considered description of the production, particularly emphasising its live elements, provides the reader with more detailed information about the performance. It allows the reader, whether potential audience in fact or potential audience only by proxy, to reach an understanding about the performance on the basis of an informed, expert, named, and independent opinion. Such more detailed descriptions and subsequent reasoned evaluations and interpretations allow readers to look beyond the reviewer's opinion and grasp some idea of the nature of the performance; for one function of the review, surely, is to enable readers not present at the performance to imagine the event for themselves through the experience of the reviewer. This is the position held by a large number of writers, such as *New York Times* reviewer Frank Rich:

For me, passing judgment on a play is absolutely the least interesting part of the job [...] The creative part of the job, the reason I enjoy doing it, is to try to re-create for the reader the experience of what it was like to be in the theater and see a particular play. (Booth 1991:176)

Printed as reportage, as news, the function of the review is always exactly that of representing the (absent) performance. However, in almost all of the extracts from the *India Song* reviews I have used it is impossible to see through, as Rich suggests is necessary, to the performance itself. It is the possibility of achieving this ambition, particularly when directed through description towards the evocation for the reader of a sense of liveness, which concerns the remainder of this chapter; for I believe that reviewers are unable to present honestly to the reader their evaluations and interpretations unless they also adequately represent the performance. The evaluative and interpretative functions of reviewing are vital, desirable, and inevitable. However, description places these statements in context and enables readers to reach an understanding of the performance for themselves as potential or theoretical audience members. To what extent, however, is it possible for description to 'represent' and allow readers to 'see' the absent performance? As in previous chapters, I am interested in our ability to represent the live-performance event: to present performance in speech, in pictures, in ideas, and now in words that do particular justice and pay particular attention to the performance's liveness. In reviewing, this is only possible through the development of the representative powers of written description.

Part Two: Description and Representation

In previous chapters, I discussed the motivation prompting the creation of archives, photographs, video, and other documentations of live performances. It is worth seeing all such post-performance existences, in whatever media, as representations that enable some trace of the event to remain after the transient moment of its creation. Written discourses, and particularly journalistic reviews, manifest a similar motivation to 'record' in attempts to describe performances. Demonstrating this, Deborah Jowitt of *The Village Voice* describes how her writing is motivated by the 'anxiety to capture and chronicle a notoriously ephemeral art' (Copeland 1998:100). Similarly, Marcia Siegel describes one responsibility of the reviewer as that of 'reporter', who enables 'dance to have a history' (Siegel 1977:xv). Many other

reviewers repeat such ideas in one form or another, even if not consciously or explicitly talking about the need for documentation. There also exists a degree of consensus as to how to achieve this ambition: a writer 'records' the performance through description. Description, of course, is not a direct, mechanical, or quasi-authoritative method of recording in the manner of still photography or video. Description does not literally document or record the performance, but the invitation to the reader to imagine the performance through description certainly is an attempt at representation. Eric Bentley, for example, shares this ambition:

Nothing a critic has can open you eyes except his own eye: he says, look! And you look [...] A good critic will get you to do so. (Booth 1991:176)

This is an observation echoed many times by other writers: such as Edwin Denby, who states that 'what one enjoys most in reading is the illusion of being present at a performance' (Denby 1986:539); and Alec Guinness, who sees reviews as requiring 'the gift of conjuring up for the reader a visual picture of the performance (Fry 1952:7). Similar formulations are also used to praise the work of particular reviewers, for instance, Julie Van Camp celebrates the work of Arlene Croce: '[she] uses words to capture a sense of what it was like to be in the audience' (Van Camp 1992:42). Likewise, Robert Brustein praises Kenneth Tynan for always managing to establish the 'exact verbal equivalent of the visual events he had witnessed' (Booth 1991:178). (It is not certain how Brustein *knows* Tynan's verbal descriptions are exact equivalents: they may be evocative, theatrical, even inspiring of the live, but he cannot know they are exact unless he was there, a point I will develop later.) These statements all suggest that one major responsibility of the reviewer is to represent the performance, to allow the reader to access the performance through the review. Unfortunately, however, discussions of the need for description and praise for reviewers' descriptive powers rarely detail precisely how writers achieve this in practice. In the following discussion, I address such problems through theoretical and practical analysis of the relationship between language, description, and the representation of liveness.

Although the call for a descriptive approach to reviewing is often urgently expressed in relation to the performing arts, the most famous exponent of a descriptive criticism was not writing about performance at all. Instead, Susan Sontag's *Against Interpretation* is an influential elucidation of the need for a descriptive critical writing about literature, and less particularly all arts. Sontag sees this as an ethical crusade, taking a moralistic tone against what she regards as the dominant instinct of the critic – interpretation:

To interpret is to impoverish, to deplete the world – in order to set up a shadow world of ‘meanings’. (Sontag 1967:7)

Sontag suggests that interpretations are secondary to the experience of a work of art, not enhancing the original experience but undermining its immediacy and destroying its power. For Sontag, the important and damning argument is that, while interpretation does enable communication about a work of art (which she recognises as necessary), this is only because it tames the experience and makes art comfortable and manageable. Indeed, she suggests that the very reaching out for interpretation expresses a lack of ability to respond to the experience and to what is really there. What matters instead is the primary ‘pure, sensuous immediacy’ of the experience and she demands instead a criticism that is ‘accurate, sharp [and] loving description’ (Sontag 1967:12).

Sontag’s ambition is seductive in that it appears to offer hope for the admirable goal of representing the experiential perception and value of art. Moreover, her image of the skilled describer of the arts has, when appropriated by performance reviewers, been one of the most influential in definitions of their craft. Although it is also present to a lesser extent in music and theatre reviewing, this is particularly the case in dance and performance art. In *Writing Dancing in the Age of Postmodernism*, Sally Banes records how for her, and many other dance writers, *Against Interpretation* was a ‘sacred text for my generation’ (Banes 1994:7). Sontag’s essay, Banes argues, was one of the main influences in establishing an aggressively descriptive, anti-interpretative, philosophy that dominated dance reviewing,

particularly in the 1960s and 70s. As already discussed, the approaches of Croce, Jowitt, and Siegel reflect this ambition for descriptive dance writing. It also often appears as the underlying tenet of earlier dance reviewers; writing in 1956, for example, George Beiswanger saw the task of criticism as to provide 'capsule descriptions' of performances (Miller 1993:45).

Away from dance, another exponent of descriptive criticism is Michael Kirby, especially in his essay 'Criticism: Four Faults', in which he rages against the immorality of evaluation and uselessness of interpretation in reviewing. To replace such 'primitive and naïve, arrogant and immoral' criticism, Kirby calls for a discipline of 'performance analysis'. He sees this as enacting the recording of ephemeral events by description and analysis, avoiding as far as possible conscious subjective statements and even any words that may be interpreted subjectively (Kirby 1974a:66). Although, the extent to which this ambition is achievable or desirable is certainly debatable, such a passionately expressed ideal is a useful tool against which to test the descriptive content of theatre reviewing today, as represented by the *India Song* reviews.

In terms of his complaints, the *India Song* reviews certainly demonstrate Kirby's perception that evaluation and (to a lesser extent) interpretation dominate much reviewing. The eight reviews include no evidence of really significant descriptive content, let alone a descriptive bias. Limitations of space are potentially significant here, as are the demands of other competing functions of the journalistic review as previously discussed. However, description and the review are compatible, as revealed by the descriptive bias of many dance reviewers. Nonetheless, across these eight theatre reviews any elements of description appear marginalised and often almost incidental.

The description that does exist in the *India Song* reviews takes a wide range of forms. This includes physical description of the stage appearance, narration of the plot, reports on the actors' performances, and discussion of the direction and other stage effects. The reviews also include description of the effect (on the reviewer

and/or audience) of any of the above elements. However, in almost all such instances description slips directly into interpretation or evaluation. For example, the following is an illustration of relatively straightforward description, attempting to communicate what happened during the performance in terms of narration of plot:

The story of *India Song* is a simple one. In 1930s colonial India, a woman, Anne-Marie Stretter, is the sensuous pivot for the bored male diplomatic community. When a glance between Anne-Marie and the Vice-Consul of Lahore is exchanged, their lives are changed forever. Meanwhile [...] (IS2)

The review continues in this style for another paragraph, with an emphasis on the plot and its expressiveness. It is indistinguishable from a hypothetical review of the play-text of *India Song* or of any novel of the play. It is in essence 'literary', containing nothing indicating either explicitly or implicitly the performative nature of the event. Although such aspects are not present in IS2, other descriptions of the plot are more immediately aware of the performance medium:

Duras' play is a strange, elegiac story of doomed love and obsession between the French ambassador's wife – the beautiful Anne-Marie Stretter – and a vice-consul from Lahore, set among the embassies and residences of Calcutta in the dying years of the empire. Duras's text is conceived as a story told by the unseen, amplified voices of four observers recalling the tragedy years later, while the action unfolds wordlessly in front of the audience; and Van Hove's production makes the whole audience, drawn into the circle of thick yellow light and sound, part of that culture of decadent voyeurism and gossip. (IS6)

Although this description opens with an already familiarly styled relation of plot, this example immediately links the narrative to the form it takes in performance. There is a direct relating of plot to staging. Even this simple technique communicates a basic awareness of the performative medium, intrinsically binding content and form together. In representing the performance, such formal description and analysis is always going to be more revealing than non-descriptive evaluation or interpretation.

Also clear in this example, however, is the rapid shift that exists in many of the reviews: description of plot, followed by what the director has done to it, followed by what it ‘means’, invariably followed by a judgement as to its degree of success. This quick shifting of description into interpretation and evaluation is perhaps partly a result of word-length restrictions (it takes less space) and partly a critical proclivity of contemporary reviewers – either way I would not see it as necessary or inevitable.

A similar movement is present in descriptions of physical aspects of the performance:

The centrepiece of Jan Versweyveld’s set is a huge rotating fan with speakers at either end, which carries the sound of rain, voices and memories around the theatre. This disconcerting effect [...] (IS4)

a series of amplified voices remember the affair, commenting, romanticising, mythologising, as the India Song [a short piece of music] of the title haunts the scene, giving it an ethereal essence. (IS2)

disembodied voices, artificially amplified and re-directed, drone flatly as if Duras’ words bored the hell out of them. (IS5)

In these instances, interpretation and/or evaluation follow description of stage elements. In each example, it would be just about possible to isolate the purely descriptive elements. For the reviewers, however, it appears that the shift from description to evaluation is automatic. Indeed, when this structure is broken it is description that is omitted, and evaluations or interpretations reached without description.

One of Kirby’s particular criticisms of reviewing, which is worth testing against the *India Song* reviews, is precisely this mixing of evaluation and description. Central to this habit, he argues, is the confusion of words and phrases indicating value in two forms: the personal and the pseudo-objective. Kirby dislikes the expression of any

personal judgements, which as subjective he perceives more pejoratively as prejudiced. (Honestly expressed opinions are subjective, but to call them prejudiced is surely puritanical.) However, what Kirby particularly condemns is the mutation of personal opinions into what he calls pseudo-objective statements – ‘attempts to refer to the known taste of others’ (Kirby 1974a:61) – which he sees as particularly manipulative and dishonest.

It is possible to see evidence of ‘pseudo-objective’ statements in the *India Song* reviews, with the use of phrases that seem to position the reviewer as spokesperson for the entire audience. Although perhaps not a wholly unworthwhile ambition, Kirby perceives these as examples of how reviewers attempt to subsume the reader into their own opinions. This possibility is certainly there with the more prescriptive statements, such as ‘warps your sense of time and place’ (IS3). The use of ‘your’ here is certainly an avoidance of saying ‘my’ and a way of not saying ‘our’: the implication is that the reviewer assumes that he shares his experiences and evaluations with the entire audience. On many occasions, I see this as a neutral and potentially very useful device (more on which later) that places the reader in the auditorium. Sometimes, however, it clearly is more misdirecting, especially in outright statements of audience responses: ‘the audience undergoes nothing but torpor’ (IS5) – as Kirby asks, how can he speak for the entire audience?

Further examination of the structure of the evaluations in the *India Song* reviews reveals that they are often not straightforward and up-front, but instead contain elements that manipulate the reader into agreement with the author. A play that in creating an atmosphere ‘succeeds rather too well’ (IS8) creates by implication a bad atmosphere. It is not possible for readers to reach the conclusion that, while the atmosphere was bad for the reviewer, it might have been good for them. Similarly, the phrase ‘should have been electric’ (IS7) contains the implicit, unwritten, and unavoidable addition ‘but wasn’t’. Another, almost identical structure can be found in the statement in one of the reviews ‘might look profound’ (IS1), which again contains the simultaneous translation ‘but wasn’t’. In other words, the reviews often get readers to assume a large amount of the judging themselves. However, they ask

readers to make such judgements only on the information provided and only in a manner that makes it impossible for them to reach any other alternative reading. The evaluative comments provide insufficient description for readers to do anything but agree with the reviewer.

To provide one further example that virtually interprets itself:

Had Ivo van Hove's production been exquisitely evocative [which again contains the implicit statement that 'it wasn't'] the evening might ['but didn't'] have cast a fragrant spell, but I couldn't see anything special about it at all. (IS1)

The reviewer's use of 'I' is clearly self-deprecating. Naturally, 'he' could not see anything special about the production for (as he had already established) there was nothing special about it. 'Had' there been, he would surely have seen it. The 'I' is magically modest at the same time as immodestly reminding us of the writer's position as appointed and expert reviewer. It is not possible to see through such evaluative statements to the performance, meaning that the reviewer does not represent the performance but presents only his evaluation of it.

In these elements, and in their evaluative, even manipulative, bias, the *India Song* reviews are probably typical of reviewing as it exists today. This said, the principal response to Kirby's demand for a neutral criticism must be serious doubt about whether any description can be wholly objective. Many of the examples I have used reveal the difficulty of resolving this question. Is 'drone flatly', for example, evaluative, or an objective description of the style of the recording and amplification in the performance? In this context, in this instance, it is clearly judgmental; but it would be equally possible to employ it in a positive context and change its implications dramatically. That Kirby insists that words such as 'beautiful' are primarily pseudo-objective, rather than descriptive, suggests the impossibility of a descriptive writing that is not evaluative.

These problems recognised, what kind of description is possible? It is easier to establish what kind is impossible, including 'exhaustive', 'correct', or 'objective' description. Description does not represent performance neutrally, perfectly, or completely (as I said before, it does not document or record performance). Instead, description represents the performance as seen by the reviewer, and honestly done this is all that can be asked for. There are many ways of describing a performance and the choices that reviewer makes will always reflect their personal perspective. This said, however, there are clearly degrees of what I would call engaged and communicative good practice in descriptive reviewing, as well as of manipulative and inert bad practice. Good practice brings the performance closer to the reader; bad practice distances it behind evaluation, interpretation, rhetoric, and wit, all of which, of course, have their place, provided it is not one that occludes the representational and descriptive. Most discussion and demonstration so far has been of bad practice. It is, therefore, well worth pursuing any methods of better enabling the reviewer to represent the experience of live performance.

Kirby himself provides no examples of good technique in his discussion of bad practice. Similarly, while Sontag is specific about what she thinks criticism should do, and about what it should contain, she is less clear on what language and techniques it should employ. While she suggests 'clear, sharp, precise' description, she never really illustrates what this is or how to do it, meanwhile admitting that it is very difficult. Instead, she merely lists examples of 'good' descriptive criticism (Manny Farber on film, Dorothy Van Ghent on Dickens, and Randall Jarrell on Whitman) without paying close examination to what makes them good. Additionally, closer examination of one of these examples is interestingly unhelpful. In 'Some Lines from Whitman', which Sontag praises, Randall Jarrell directs his attention to how Walt Whitman writes, rather than what he writes about or how he can be interpreted. In this, Jarrell certainly practices Sontag's prescription for a non-interpretative criticism that considers the experience of the work for the reader; but his method of performing this intention is to quote Whitman directly, at length, and with little addition. At various points he remarks upon this practice:

To show Whitman for what he is one does not need to praise or explain or argue, one needs simply to quote [...] How can one quote enough? (Jarrell 1960:106-110)

Finally, Jarrell notes that, as with much great writing, Whitman's work achieves 'a point at which criticism seems not only unnecessary but absurd' (Jarrell 1960:119). The implications of this statement are extremely problematic.

It is possible that quotation performs 'criticism' through demonstration. Surely, however, it only performs descriptive criticism if the idea of description is exact replication of the original. The ambition of such description seems to be the literal reproduction of the original; the logical result of this would be literary criticism replaced by reprints. That literary criticism is manifest in the same language as its subject makes this possible if not desirable, similarly art criticism could be replaced by reproductions. Indeed, this is exactly what George Steiner proposes in *Real Presences*, where he argues that 'dispassionate summaries', 'representative extracts and quotations', 'catalogues', and 'reproductions' are the only discourses about art that are necessary or legitimate. Equally, Steiner suggests that all performance criticism is parasitical and secondary and that in an imaginary utopia of 'immediate responses' it would be replaced entirely by repeat performances (Steiner 1989:5-8). Aside from its practicality, the desirability of this utopia is arguable, as I will expand upon later. However, as a method of teasing out exactly what the actual purpose of performance criticism is (or should be) such proposals are worth pursuing further.

The implication Steiner's condemnation of secondary responses would seem to suggest that criticism should represent its subject as directly and untransformingly as possible. Echoing such ambitions, Patrice Pavis, for example, appears to lament the fact that 'no description can do other than radically modify the object it describes' as if the objective should be perfect reproduction (Pavis 1982:111). This also seems to be implied by Jarrell in his extensive use of quotations, who, in using the very words of his subject, appears determined to remove all risks of modification. Perhaps the implication of any assertively 'descriptive' criticism, such as that advocated by

Sontag, would therefore be writing that, if it did not literally reproduce its subject, would aim to reproduce in the reader the experience of its subject.

An example of this problematic desire for criticism that replicates the experience of its subject is put forward by Roland Barthes in 'The Grain of the Voice' (Barthes 1985:267-277). In this essay, Barthes argues that music 'fares badly' from the onslaught of linguistic translation, a remark similar to Steiner's declaration that 'When it speaks of music, language is lame' (Steiner 1989:19). Music criticism, Barthes suggests, produces writing that is about writing about music: writing that is one, possibly two, steps away from the music itself. Barthes is largely right here: music reviewers frequently devote large amounts of their limited space to contextual aspects – including performance history, social history, and biographical and psychological interpretations – with any consideration of the actual performance sidelined as a result. (Such deviation, of course, is not restricted to music and is noticeable in much other reviewing, including the *India Song* coverage.) While examination of these issues is neither uninteresting nor unimportant, I would agree with Barthes that their consideration has a tendency to dominate over description and representation of the experience of the performance. This tendency is no doubt encouraged by such extra-musical discussion having a very strong shared vocabulary and established discourse, in contrast to the weaker discourse of performance representation.

Indeed, while Barthes criticises music criticism for having a strong 'phenotext' (all that is literary, meaningful, analogical, contextual), he complains that it has a weak or non-existent 'genotext' (the practice, the action, the experience of music, ending not in understanding but in pleasure or bliss). Barthes' separation of pleasure from understanding mirrors Sontag's anti-interpretative and pro-experiential agenda and the privileging of sensual experiences over intellectual responses that Banes and Copeland argue is the motivation for descriptively biased dance criticism (Banes 1994 and Copeland 1998:104). Although I would suggest that this division is largely artificial – in my experience pleasure and understanding often co-exist – I would agree that much contemporary music and theatre criticism (and to a lesser extent

dance criticism) does include a predominance of phenotextual analysis. To perform 'well', therefore, Barthes argues that critical writing must somehow develop its genotext. The ambition for Barthes is for language to account for music while loosing or modifying as little as possible of the nature of the original experience (the similarities here with Sontag's 'erotics' of art are evident). He is looking for a language that can somehow replicate the experience of music: music not as meaning but as practice. In this, Barthes maintains his demand, which literary theorist Hugh Davidson describes as existing in his earlier essays, that criticism must always write in a language harmonious with that of the work (Davidson 1968:98).

However, I would suggest that the logical extension of Barthes' ambitions, and his suggestion that language performs badly in accounting for music, would inevitably result in the return to Steiner's argument that only the performance of music presents useful criticism about music. As it is self-evidently impossible for language to quote music directly, perhaps the only method of fulfilling Barthes' ambitions for music criticism would be musical analysis through music. Similarly, perhaps the only useful communication about live performance can be through live performance, suggesting by implication that all other extra-performance discourses must ultimately fail to represent anything approaching the experience of their subject. Putting such theory into practice, Hans Keller proposes a system of 'functional analysis' that seeks to avoid all the transformative, evaluative, and distorting effects of language about music. Overcoming the obstacle of criticism being in a different medium and 'language' than its subject, Keller's method of criticism would be wordless, 'notes about notes, as literary criticism is words about words' (Keller 1994:8).

Keller's concern is with the demands of the formal analysis of musical compositions, not with music in performance. However, it is interesting that he expresses his delight in the performance of his 'functional analysis', and particular satisfaction at the positive audience response to their live performance (Keller 1987:147). It is partly for this reason, that Keller saw the fulfilment and justification of his ideas in their performance, that I am sceptical as to whether such proposals present actual, practical, or useful methods of music criticism. For example, at one point Keller

declares that his analytic scores are easier to understand than the originals because they bring the background of their subject score to the fore of the function analysis (Keller 1994:127). In which case why go to the bother of listening to the original? All that is important would appear to be in the analysis, and, additionally, in a more accessible and filtered form. Although no doubt he is not consciously intending this, if a functional analysis represents what is essential about a piece of music then, by implication, everything else is inessential. Hence, it seems to me that functional analysis would either tend towards replication of its subject or render the original logically obsolete. Musicologist David Burrows makes a similar point when he discusses possible methods of presenting (as a form of criticism) experiential responses to music. Burrows suggests that any such method

would have to provide an experiential inventory of every detail in it, and in the order in which they occur [... I]t's easy to imagine a movie-like multidimensional representation of the piece as it evolves for some particular participant on a particular occasion. But besides the tedium entailed, this procedure would be too close to the actual musical experience to accomplish certain independent aims of analysis (Burrows 1997:540)

An experiential analysis, therefore, might be too close to the actual experience of music to be useful as analysis: an effective retort to the demands for a criticism that somehow replicates the semiotic system or sensual experience of its subject. Such criticism fails theoretically and practically because it is too close to its subject.

Based upon the foregoing discussion, I now think it is possible to present some generalised notes of what is important at this stage: firstly, the purpose of criticism is to enable exchange and communication about art. Criticism, moreover, is communication about art in form apart from itself. To do this, some kind of distance, and indeed translation and modification, is required and valuable. The ambition of criticism is not to be neutral, complete, nor to replicate its subject. Instead, it is selective, presenting what the writer finds interesting, memorable, and worth articulating about the experience.

Equally clear, additionally, is the need for art, and in this context particularly live performance, to exist in criticism: to be represented and representable in linguistic discourse. It is such exchange about the performance that allows it to be present in the articulation of ideas, of meanings, experiences, and interpretations that is the proper objective of linguistic discourse. There is also, as I discussed in Chapters Two and Three, a cultural desire and even urgency to talk about and represent experiences of live performance. However, while extra-performance representation is inevitable and desirable, to form sensible and useful exchanges such discourses must be about the experience of live performance and neither attempt to be the experience or fall too far away and neglect the experience altogether. Therefore, achieved through expressive and evocative description, reviewing should aim to represent the experience of performance to the reader, allowing him or her to access the performance through the representation, not attempting to recreate, replicate, or repeat the experience.

What is required, therefore, is not the rendering of a perfect reproduction of the experience or essential nature of live performance into language (i.e. the impossible and undesirable). Instead, I wonder if it is not possible to produce a description that renders the reviewer's evaluative, interpretative, and sensual experience of the live-performance event into a written, linguistic equivalent. To provide a focus for this speculative enquiry I return to the two elements that I identified in Chapter One as central to what is valued about live performance: time and space. If language is to represent live performance, it must represent live performance's temporality and spatiality.

Part Three: Description and Time

The temporally located description of live performance would make manifest the valuation of its transience identified in previous chapters. This perception can be swiftly revisited: Phelan suggests that performance becomes itself through

‘disappearance’; Kirby insists theatre is ‘ephemeral’; Banes argues that dance ‘disappears’ more immediately and leaves less trace than any other art form. (Indeed, there seems to be an undeclared competition between proponents of different performance forms as to which is the most ephemeral!)

In many theoretical descriptions of live performance, the imagery of time and of time passing is prominent: the performance takes place in time, an event for that moment only. Equally significant is the establishment of the audience as witnesses to the performance: the performance passes in front of the audience, recalled only in their memory of the experience. Words suggestive of time, such as ‘trace’, ‘disappears’, ‘memory’, ‘moment’, ‘event’, and ‘present’, recur repeatedly in these discussions, serving to describe what is seen as vitally live and valuable about live performance. Audience members also express temporal based valuations of live performance:

It’s live, you see it once and once only, it’s really of the moment. (Young Directions Connexions Group 1990:11)

in the theatre you are watching it, you are watching them act and your watching it evolve in front of you (Richard, Chapter Two:113)

There is, I would suggest, a large body of consensus across these various discourses regarding live performance’s urgent and vital temporality, to which I would add my own voice and the discourse presented in this thesis. Some of the discourses I have examined establish this position explicitly, and it represents a method of both factually describing live performance and of detailing what is valuable about it. There are, of course, dissenters to this consensus: questioning the extent to which live events can be described as transient, uncompromised by repetition or representation. However, what even these dissenting commentators cannot and do not question is the constitution of live performance as temporally located in cultural perceptions and valuations. In other words, ‘time’ is central to a general conception of live performance. (The question as to whether this conception is essential and drawn from performance, or socially constituted and posited on performance, is

carefully balanced between perceptions of discourses as reflecting social phenomena or constructing them.)

The languages of these various discourses often explicitly discuss and employ temporal based imagery. They are examples of overt language use: representing either deliberate attempts to describe live performance per se, attempts to sell it as a concept, or answers to questions asking about the experience of liveness. Even when not explicit, however, an awareness of temporality as significant to live experiences is usually implicit in either the practice or the theory of many representations of live performance. This is the case with still photography's ability to freeze time, with the archive's status as a record of time past, and indeed in the entire debate about the need to document transient live performance. To what extent, however, are these descriptions and valuations of temporal uniqueness present in journalistic reviews and to what extent should they be?

One immediate response to this question is look for explicit discussions in the reviews of live performance as a temporal art form. References to any particular event as live, however, are rare. In the *India Song* reviews, for example, there are only a couple of instances, including:

Composer Harry de Wit's presence on Jan Versweyveld's set playing his score live gives the production the air of a precise avant-garde concert, and one is gripped by the actors' unstudied concentration. (IS2)

This review contains two of the words identified as occurring throughout discussions of performance's temporality: 'presence' and 'live'. Aside from being unusual in journalistic review, the overt and conscious use of such words is perhaps of less interest than any implicit aspects that signal the unconscious perception of the event as a live performance, such unconscious elements constituting the performance as live in the very structure and grammar of the review. In the above extract, for example, it is possible to see the construction of what is a dynamic and to certain extent temporally located image. When the reviewer writes that 'one is gripped', this

is a description of a continuing, present, and vital event. Of course, a similar expression would also describe the experience of reading a book, or watching a film, which although not live are temporally located experiences. However, it is this kind of subtle, perhaps unconscious, awareness of temporality that I want to focus on. What I am interested in is how an unspoken conception of liveness manifests itself in the language of reviews; moreover, how would it be *possible* to communicate temporal experience as an intrinsic part of the language of the review.

As I noted before, few of the *India Song* reviews include any significant description whatsoever, let alone a bias towards temporally located description. However, by considering short segments from the different reviews that present the same element of staging it is possible to begin to mark out possible examples of temporal descriptions. The following five extracts all discuss the use of ‘smellorama’ effects in *India Song*. Between them, they display the whole range of descriptive methods and habits that I have been examining. I discuss each in turn, starting with examples of ‘bad’ descriptive practices (the immediately evaluative, manipulative, pseudo-objective, overly rhetorical) before highlighting why some reviews seem to me to represent the performance better specifically because of their inclusion of a more temporal, dynamic, language. The first example is familiar:

[...] the supposedly oriental smells wafting into the auditorium reminded me of nothing more than Johnson’s floor polish. (IS1)

Even before this reviewer employs the descriptive element ‘oriental’, he already qualifies and evaluates it with the very judgmental ‘supposedly’. The extract continues with an example of the kind of pithy comment and shared rhetoric of ‘knocking copy’ that I suggested earlier was typical of reviews. The second example is another instance where the primary motivation is to display the reviewer’s own wit:

An aroma-stimulating technique sounded promising, but instead of street smells, spice or the scent of the monsoon, the overwhelming aroma was of lavatory cleaner. (IS7)

This, in fact, is not a description at all, but an illustration of manipulative evaluation designed to bring the reader into agreement with the reviewer's opinion while bypassing the actual production and the processes that produced the evaluation. The implication of 'sounded promising' is of course the immediate supplementary 'but wasn't', and even before proceeding any further the reader is forced into grammatical concurrence with the critic.

In other reviews, however, I believe that the description begins to draw the reader closer into the reviewer's experience of the performance:

[the audience is] bathed in unexpected and intense smells and sounds [...] (IS6)

This example works through use of dynamic words ('bathed') and the creation of an experiential impression. 'Intense' and 'unexpected' are both words that hover uncertainly between description and interpretation. It would be possible to see them as pseudo-objective, and not actually telling the reader much about the smells at all. However, as purely subjective statements the words do tell about the reviewer's perception of the performance (and who else's perception could they tell?), perhaps allowing the reader to imaginatively create the experience by proxy. I will return to this point later, in a consideration of intersubjective experiences. Staying with the evocation of time, however, it is possible to see that other descriptions locate themselves firmly in the present:

[...] there's a strong scent of citrus and flowers in the air. (IS4)

This is an interesting and purely descriptive example, phrased in a present and experiential manner. Similarly:

[...] washes of citronella engulf the audience, completing a sensory bombardment that sets the nerve-endings aflame. (IS3)

The descriptive element here is fairly independent, but the movement to evaluative judgement is rapid and automatic. What is more interesting in this extract is the use of a large amount of dynamic imagery: 'washes', 'engulf', 'bombardment', and 'aflame', all words which create a highly dramatic overall effect.

I believe that through the methods I have picked out, these last three examples contain the beginnings of an effective, dynamic, and temporally located description of live performance. They contain dynamic imagery, the evocation of shared presence, and use of the present tense to inspire an awareness of temporality. Is it possible that these elements, drawn together and given a higher profile, offer the prospect of a performative, temporal, descriptive criticism?

Description and the Present Tense

While the *India Song* reviews display little agreement regarding descriptive style, they do begin to show a remarkable degree of consistency in terms of one aspect of grammatical structure. The writing in these reviews, and in reviews in general, consistently represents the live performance in the present tense. While this is the case for evaluations and interpretations as well – 'Its novelty is' (IS1) or 'This is perhaps where van Hove's production is weakest' (IS6) – this aspect is particularly noticeable in the descriptions. Characters are described as still being something – 'is a figure' (IS2) – and images are related as if they still exist – 'A section of the audience is on the stage' (IS4). The implication is that the event is still happening, that it is still present. Significantly, this is the case not just for the production as a whole (which would make literal sense in the case of a long running production), nor just for the play-text (which would also be logical given the 'eternal' existence of the script), but also for specific momentary instances in the performance.

What is also interesting is how the few reviews that do break from this use of the present tense seem awkward. As it happens, all the following examples come from one review:

These included neon street lighting [...]

Van Hove's piano playing was a joy [...]

[...] the overwhelming aroma was of lavatory cleaner. (IS7)

To a certain extent, the awkwardness of these examples could simply be because they stand out against the otherwise consistent use of the present tense. Even so, the question still arises as to why such a convention exists, and what is its effect?

It is true that such usage is a convention in all reviewing. In book reviewing, for example, the reviewer tends to write about a work in the present tense. If an author is dead it is only they, and not their work or ideas, that the reviewer places in the past tense: 'Shakespeare wrote Hamlet in the 1600s' but 'Hamlet is a tragedy'. The work, after all, does not die and always remains in the present. Additionally, the use of the present tense suggests the work or ideas have a continued relevance and vibrancy. Reviewers sometimes also use a 'historic-present' mode of plot description: 'Hamlet kills Polonius', not 'Hamlet killed Polonius'. Each moment of fiction as a result becomes in turn, as it is considered, the present moment of action: Hamlet kills Polonius, so he is banished, but he returns etc. No moment of the fiction ever entirely vanishes into the past, but remains continually present.

For books as static physical objects, and even for ideas, plots, and entirely non-physical and therefore timeless entities, this holds little problem. Related to live performance, which as an event is not static, and the use of the present tense is more problematic. Additionally, if the reasons for the use of the present tense in performance reviewing are the same as in other criticism then the implications are significant. For it suggests that the performance is always with us and is always present.

The use of the present tense in performance reviewing becomes even more problematic when related to the practicalities of reviewing and performance production. Most reviewers write having watched the performance just once, often having attended on a designated 'press-night', which is often the first night. Reporting of the first night clearly fits in with the review's status as reportage of that which is new. However, as I indicated in Chapter One, it is also possible to perceive each performance, even during the run of the same production, as essentially different. Phelan, for example: 'Performance occurs over a time that will not be repeated. It can be performed again, but this repetition marks it as "different"' (Phelan 1993:146). In which case there is an argument to review each night of a run of performances: each one is new. New York critic Robert Brustein recognises this possibility, partially accepting that performances can change drastically from night to night but also commenting:

Since critics form opinions on the basis of a single viewing, we have to assume that the performance we see is fairly representative of those seen by all other audiences. How else are we to commit ourselves with confidence to the relatively permanent state of print? (Brustein 1989:192)

In particular Brustein states that he is 'sheepish' about using adjectives to describe actor's performances, suggesting that the biggest variables from night to night can be found there (Brustein 1989:189). In other words, amongst theoretical statements of performance's ephemerality are practical suggestions that a performance can be affected by first night nerves, by low energy during the middle of a run, by an unresponsive Tuesday night audience, or whatever other contingent factor. The majority of performances are staged more than once, even if only present in a particular venue for a single night, as a result the 'implied run' is relevant for most productions. (See Chapter Five for a discussion of these issue in relation to a 'tour' of orchestral music concerts.) With the use of the present tense in reviewing, this becomes particularly pertinent: what is the difference between saying that an actor 'gives' a good or bad performance, rather than 'gave' a good performance? Potentially the latter refers to the particular night the reviewer attended and the

former to some assumed continuum over all the nights of the production. The reviewer, however, would rarely have knowledge of such continuum, having most likely attended just one performance. More hypothetically: a potentially random factor interrupts the performance the reviewer is watching. For example, a dog on stage barks: is the dog very well trained to bark at this point every night, or is this a random factor with some performances featuring a barking dog and some not? Does the reviewer write 'a dog barks' or 'a dog barked'?

In Chapter One, I discussed how the perception of each night of the performance-run as essentially different exists at the same time as recognition that each night is essentially the same. (Somewhat similarly, Chapter Three examined the possible that prior notation is necessary for the performance of chance.) Beckerman usefully solves this paradox by suggesting that the ambition of a production is to reinvigorate and rediscover a sense of presentness on each night of a performance. Consequently, difference, similarity and essential presentness become oddly compatible. A similar thing occurs in reviewing. A review is essentially coverage of a single performance; as I suggested its status as reportage is as significant as its status as criticism. Use of present tense in the review, however, marks a declaration of continuing relevance, continuing renewal, in a continuing (and repeated) performance. Paradoxically, additionally, a review in an archive, in book form, or simply published after a production closes continues to represent the performance to readers in the present tense even after the production has long finished.

An examination of a single example from the *India Song* reviews usefully explores this issue further. The line 'A section of the audience is on the stage' refers on one level to a fact outside of any particular performance of the production. A section of the audience is on the stage on every night, on every occasion, in every venue. In straight reporting, covering the performance in the occurrence of a fire or death of a performer, a journalist would state 'A section of the audience was on the stage'. The journalistic review, in contrast, places the event in the continuing present tense. The concept of the repeated performance, or run, cannot entirely account for this: the particular example given is from *The Stage*, and was printed after the last night of

India Song's run at the Edinburgh International Festival. Instead, completing the reviewer's sentence reveals the full significance of the present tense usage:

A section of the audience is on the stage, pervasive sepia light turns companions into old photographs before your eyes, and there's a strong scent of citrus and flowers in the air. (IS4)

There can be no doubt here that the review does not only attempt to establish *India Song* as present and recurring in the sense of the implied run; the writer is clearly also attempting to conjure up an impression of what the performance is like as it is being experienced: an experience that for the reviewer – and the reference to 'your eyes' extends this out to the audience and reader as well – is singular, one-off, and ephemeral. The use of the present tense means that the writer is declaring: 'A section of the audience is on stage as I watch *India Song*'. And perhaps even: 'A section of the audience is on stage right here, right now' constructed as present between writer and reader in the shared theatre of our experienced stocked imagination. As Beckerman declares, live performance seeks to reinstate temporal presence for each repeated performance. Similarly, the use of the present tense in reviewing (whether used conventionally or with full consciousness) is a practical technique that can instate a sense of temporal presence and dynamic process in the mind of the reader.

Time and Language

Alongside the host of theorists and practitioners who explicitly discuss live performance's temporality, two writers have directly examined how writing can grasp temporality in language. The more useful of these is David Burrows, whose ideas I look at after first considering Bernard Beckerman's discussion of theatre criticism.

Beckerman's work is interesting in this instance because it clearly displays the relationship between a theoretical description of live-performance temporality and a practical desire to express that temporality in the substance of critical language. Beckerman's description of theatre as temporal is clear, and examined in detail in

Chapter One. What he also attempts to describe is how performance commentary can best cope with this dynamic aspect.

Beckerman describes how conventional theatre criticism adopts what he calls a 'horizontal approach' to analysis. Criticism follows through entire strands independently: plot, character, spectacle, and theme are all disentangled from one another and examined separately from the beginning to end of the performance. This does indeed appear to be the conventional approach of much theatre reviewing, being present, for example, in the work of Kenneth Tynan and Michael Billington. Both these reviewers frequently structure their reviews through separate consideration of different elements of a production, usually in neatly divided paragraphs. This clean (if somewhat wooden) segmenting of the review clearly benefits reviewers in easing their task compositionally, and does provide an obvious structural guide to the reader. However, as Beckerman observes, it does militate against consideration of the production as a coherent whole, and (in particular) prevents the reader from gaining a sense of the temporal movement of the performance. It is also, Beckerman points out, a technique essentially borrowed from literary criticism, which he sees as excusable to a certain extent as an established method of dealing with material. However, as he argues, 'the habit of mind that chooses to treat a play as a collection of strands inhibits an appreciation of it as a sequence of total experiences' (Beckerman 1979:36). Here Beckerman lucidly describes the situation as I also see it. As a linguistic representation of live performance, the review must represent its subject as it is experienced and not (through implication of structure, language, or interest) as something it is not. The danger of utilising 'borrowed' languages in discourses and representations of live performance – such as that of literary criticism here, or, as examined in Chapters Two and Three, the discourses or methods of archival retention, photographic revelation, or mimetic evaluation – is that they do begin to inhibit and distort appreciation of the distinct experience of liveness.

Beckerman's own proposal is for a 'vertical method of analysis', which examines the same aspects of plot, character, and spectacle but now as they relate to coherent sections of the play:

The vertical method [...] is bound by temporal progression. Rather than treat a play as movement along separate paths of plot, character, and so forth, it envisions the progression of the play in its entirety. The elements of analysis, therefore, are not plot and character but units of time (Beckerman 1979:37)

Beckerman describes the units of time, his 'coherent sections', as established in a similar way to a director's blocking and timing of a performance. Beckerman's critics clearly need to be able to recognise the pacing of the play, or else establish their own segmentation from the action in front of them. A critic will then proceed to analyse the performance along what are largely traditional lines but according to this new system of 'vertical' segmentation. Beckerman, unfortunately, does not provide detailed examples of his system in action, nor suggest instances of what he considers good practice. However, the idea is worth retaining, particularly as it is similar to techniques developed further in relation to music criticism by Burrows (though it should be pointed out that Burrows' prime concern is scholarly analysis and not the journalistic review).

Like Beckerman's, Burrows' point of departure is a discussion as to the temporal nature of performance. His initial assumption is that music is essentially the business of performances, which are ongoing engagements between sounds and the perceivers of those sounds. His second assumption is that

the coupling of the flow of sounds with the attention of perceivers is controlled by the temporality of the sounds, and is therefore limited to a now whose content changes ceaselessly. Music takes place in its own almost total sonic absence. (Burrows 1997:529)

It is worth stressing the similarities, in assumptions, in tone, and in language used between this description of music and other descriptions examined of dance, theatre, or performance in general. Particularly, in this instance, the use of key dynamic words: 'flow', 'change', and 'absence' standing in here for Phelan's idea of

‘disappearance’. ‘Sonic absence’, for example, declares that even as music *is*, it disappears and that this governs the listeners’ experience.

Burrows’ next step is to call for a method of critical analysis that accounts for this important temporality. ‘Traditional analysis’, writes Burrows,

does not treat music as an art of performance that unfolds in the now. Instead it assumes a synoptic perspective relative to the content of a ‘piece’ [...] Processual analysis is a quite different approach. It is based upon the assumption that performance is the root musical occasion and on the fact that performers and listeners have a relationship to piece of music that is quite different from that of the traditional analyst. (Burrows 1997:538)

Burrows, unfortunately, does not provide examples, or exemplification of what he means by ‘traditional analysis’. However, it is clear that there are similarities (in motivation and potential) between Burrows’ ‘processual analysis’ and Beckerman’s ‘vertical analysis’ – the most important being the focus on the temporal experience of live performance. Beckerman’s ‘sequence of total experiences’ can be directly compared to the experiential account of music Burrows is advocating. The concept of vertical analysis is directly comparable to Burrows’ earlier suggestion that processual analysis ‘would work with a dense series of instantaneous takes of stages in the musical process’ (Burrows 1972:248). The essential element of the proposed ‘processual analysis’ is to focus on the ‘performance of music’, the unfolding dynamic experience, and not on the piece of music, supposed by traditionalists to be a unitary, static, and stable entity. (Such consideration might result, for example, from structural analysis of the musical score or be encouraged by perception of notation as pre-eminent to performance.)

In ‘A Dynamical Systems Perceptive on Music’, Burrows begins to provide a more detailed description of how a processual analysis might work. To begin, he stresses two somewhat conflicting principles. First, that ‘music is essentially constituted of performance’, with audiences engaging with performances in a manner ‘controlled

by the temporality of the score' (Burrows 1997:530). The proposed processual analysis is a method designed to acknowledge the temporal existence of music. Second, however, while declaring that criticism must intrinsically link analysis and experience, Burrows also insists that 'omniscience in detachment' is one of the primary joys and purposes of criticism. Further, as we have seen, he insists that any method of criticism too close to the experience itself would be analytically useless.

So he attempts to formulate a method that both reflects the temporal existence and experience of music and is also useful for analysis. His solution, which he demonstrates in relation to the Sarabande from J.S. Bach's Sixth Unaccompanied Cello Suite, is to employ the analyst's detached omniscience to select key moments from the music for detailed processual analysis. Post-event, therefore, Burrows imagines the critic selecting small sections from the piece as a whole on which to conduct a minute dynamic analysis. He acknowledges the inconsistency here between the immediate present analysis required on one hand and the detached perspective demanded on the other. However, he defends this compromise as enabling the selection of defining moments from the music which would have been central to a listener's experience of the performance and that will therefore most benefit from a detailed processual analysis. The compromise, just as importantly, enables the processual analysis to be possible at all, and circumvents the dangers of analysis too close to the original to be beneficial. It is worth providing an extract of Burrows' demonstration of processual analysis. Here he is discussing his first selected 'moment', the C natural above middle C on the second beat of the thirteenth bar:

The initial oscillation of the C natural cycles to the past along with the arrival of its next one. In under a second, as oscillation follows oscillation, a larger event emerges. Comparison of the interval separating the oscillation of the instant from its predecessor, with the consistent period governing the succession of oscillations laid down in the past, confirms the new emergent in this case as a steady tone, C natural. Mild tonal discomfiture, along with a gentle elation, is induced by this event (Burrows 1997:541)

As clearly demonstrated by this example, Burrows' processual analysis as he presents it is not immediately of use to the critic-as-reviewer. In particular, although Burrows insists his method relates to music-in-performance, his approach is dependent on subsequent analysis, through either recording or score, rather than on the memory of the live performance. (Indeed, extracts from the score accompany his examples.) Reviewers are unlikely to be able to perform the kind of minute omnipotent analysis that Burrows calls for, rarely if ever having the resources, space, or time to conduct this kind of analysis. Nor does it particularly concur with the other competing functions of the journalistic review. I guess it would be more applicable in a scholarly journal, programme notes, or certain moments of up-market CD reviewing. The requirements are also incompatible with the one-off nature of reviewers' live experiences.

However, though his ideas seem to move away from both the experiential and live aspects of live performance that I want to focus on, I want to retain some aspects of Burrows' discussion of a processual analysis, alongwith Beckerman's ideas for a vertical analysis, as between them they usefully highlight possible methods of representing the temporality of live performance in language. These concepts present, I believe, the beginnings of a method of temporal performance writing. This would seek to represent the temporality of live performance and thereby reflect the experience of the performance as live performance. The key elements of any processual reviewing would be threefold: first, concentration on time and the perception of live performance as essentially temporal; second, emphasis on the experience the performance through the ever-changing 'now' of a particular moment; and third, examination of how audiences construct their perception of the performance as a whole by tracing that 'now' back to the immediate experiences in the past and forwards to anticipated experiences. Central to the experience of live performance, these aspects should also be central to the reviewer's representation of live performance.

Live performance is the experience of a series of moments of 'now' which the audience attempts to relate, backwards and forwards, in order to construct a conception of the performance as a whole. Post-performance, reviewers (and all audience members) deal with traces: memories of moments, not perfect or total recollection of the performance. Moreover, what audiences retain in the memory, the traces of performance, reflects that not all moments are equal. The use of concepts such as 'climax', 'epiphany', 'leitmotif', and 'coup de théâtre' – even away from analysis of the 'intention' of choreographers, composers, or dramatists – suggest that there are certain moments of a performance that define the event, and the audience's experience of the event, as a whole. They are dominant performative 'moments'. A coup de théâtre, for example, is a 'totally unexpected action that suddenly changes the situation, development or outcome of the action' (Pavis 1998:83). In other words, it is a moment around which all other moments take their meaning and their signification. In any experience, and in particular in the structured and designed experience of a performance, some moments are more important than other moments; some moments define how other moments are perceived; some moments are remembered more than other moments. The selection of significant moments for analysis can therefore occur after the performance and depend on an omniscient detached overview. However (as Burrows suggests), this overview can also be directed to selecting defining moments of the performance that are central to the audience's experience of the performance as it occurs. The selection of what moments around which to construct the experience of performance should be guided by the performance's own internal logic. The selection and analysis of defining moments provide the required distance and translation from the performance. Directed along such lines, a review attempts to represent the experience through analysis and description, not replicate it. Perfect replication of performance is neither possible nor desirable. Instead, the review will seek to represent the experience, deliberately interpreting and translating their temporal experience into linguistic discourse.

Demonstration of the possible appearance of a processual reviewing is the best way of summarising these ideas. To do this I return to *India Song* and the eight newspaper

reviews that covered the performance. As already revealed, *India Song* is an unusual production whereby off stage voices reminisce, narrate all the action, and even speak the characters' dialogue. These voices, and indeed the stage directions, are pre-recorded and relayed to the audience by loudspeakers mounted on an industrial-looking revolving fan. In the production, there is one exception to this, one moment when an actor speaks aloud on stage. As an isolated incident, this is clearly going to stand out as a pivotal moment, a memorable episode in the production: recognised as such by the audience in the theatre as it occurs. Looking at the eight reviews of *India Song* it is possible to find references to this moment in the production in all but two of the pieces. The references differ significantly in terms of length, focus, style, content, language, evaluation, and interpretation, as can be seen from the following extracts:

Its novelty is that the actors on stage, barring two [sic] climactic moments, do not speak: they only mime the action as the tale is chorically related by unseen narrative voices. The device is not particularly fruitful: it becomes confusing, and it led the actors here to some ludicrous silent-movie excesses. (IS1)

When, finally, one character does shout a dozen short lines, the effect is electrifying. (IS3)

So it is startling when the play's one moment of open, agonising emotion is uttered by Siegers in his own, full-throated, raw voice. This cuts through the studied ennui of the characters' world, and has the same visceral impact as the stylised monsoon that dominates the stage in a flash of light and sound. (IS4)

[...] at the height of the story, [Ivo van Hove] lets the drama break free, as the vice-consul roars out his huge, frustrated longing in his own voice. (IS6)

In contrast, when our frustrated Vice-Consul screams out his desire and despair 'live' on stage, the air is momentarily electrified for all too brief a moment. (IS7)

It would be possible to run through these extracts and highlight the styles of description examined earlier. The habits identified are all present: the instinctive movement from description to interpretation; the entangling of description with evaluation; the pithy rhetorical flourish; the use of the present tense; the use of dynamic words and imagery. What is most significant, however, is that they all begin to achieve effective communication of the live-performance experience. Whether phrased positively or negatively, they are all descriptions of live performance; they are descriptions that are not static but contain within them their own performative dynamic. They enable the reader to access (through creation not recreation, representation not reproduction) the reviewer's experience of the live performance. What is most interesting, however, is that in each case the description and commentary on this single moment forms a climactic centrepiece of the review as a whole. In other words, it holds a similar position in the review to the one it had in the performance.

These demonstrations of processual reviewing are tentative. However, by taking (and subtly editing and adding to) extracts from several of the *India Song* reviews I believe it is possible to produce something more deliberately directed to my own objectives, and which manifests in language something corresponding to my experience of this moment in the performance. The following 'review' intends to evoke for the reader the emotion that the production establishes before this 'moment', and convey the sense of interruption and unexpected feeling provoked by the sudden speaking of lines live on stage:

In *India Song*, no word of the script is spoken in view of the audience; instead, off-stage voices describe the action. The voices drone from speakers mounted on the arms of an enormous metal fan revolving over and dominating the entire stage. The unseen voices are recorded on tape, and so too are the stage directions, edited into a fast-flowing barrage of detail, which is sometimes echoed, sometimes contradicted by the movement on stage. The characters mime to the half-remembered dialogue, seemingly helpless to escape from their destinies.

A section of the audience is also on the stage, bathed in pervasive sepia light, lounging in soft black cushions, and engulfed by the strong smell of citrus and spices in the air. The play shows us the world of European colonials, who languish and interact indolently in the heat of India, only street sounds and music hinting at the teeming life happening somewhere else. Boredom dominates, and lazy sensuality marks the developing sexual obsession of The vice-consul from Lahore for the French Ambassador's wife. A sense of lassitude, of torpor and monsoon dampness descends as the six silent actors drift across the open stage.

Then, in a moment of agonising and unrefined emotion, The vice-consul roars out his huge, frustrated longing in his own voice. This raw, live voice cuts through the studied ennui of the characters' world, with visceral impact on the transfixed audience. It slowly drifts into silence; the difference in tone, in meaning, and emotion between the cry of real feeling and the lethargy of the unseen voices echoing in our minds as the spoken stage directions sharply interrupt: 'Black.'

As this example hopes to demonstrate, it is possible to convey a sense of temporal movement, and particularly of experience linked to temporal process, in language. Evaluation and interpretation, which are present in this example, take a backseat to description, which is directed towards inviting the reader to imagine what the experience was like as it happened.

It is for this kind of affect that a temporal reviewing would concentrate on the self-selecting defining moments of a production. A processual reviewing would write about these moments in a manner that contains the same dynamism as the original performance and enables at least partial imagination of that original experience. The written descriptions of the key temporal moments in a performance become the key linguistic moments of the review. Already, additionally, this example demonstrates how the positioning of the reviewer (and by proxy the reader) in time necessitates awareness of space and of the experiencing body – both of which I will consider now.

Part Four: Description, Body, and Space

In Chapter One, I identified the importance of space, along with time, as crucial to the experience of live performance. Indeed, the concept of a unique temporality is indivisible from the concept of a unique spatial dimension: 'now' is always accompanied by 'here'. As I discussed, this understanding of spatiality is associated with several overlapping ideas of presence. The first of these is the importance of the co-presence between audience members: Peter Brook suggests this when he describes the audience as 'witnesses' to the event, with the experience being a form of 'commune' (Melzer 1995a:148); Herbert Blau argues that an audience 'is not so much a mere congregation of people as a body of thought and desire' (Blau 1990:25). The respondents to my audience research exercise articulated strikingly similar sentiments: 'it was a group of people leaving rather than just singletons wandering out' (Jennifer, Chapter Two:114). Similarly, there are many discussions articulating a second presence: the existence of the performer on stage, appearing in person in front of the audience: 'Eliminate the actuality of man,' writes Beckerman, 'and eliminate theatre' (Beckerman 1979:7). Other writers even place particular stress on the human performer in music (Laszlo 1967:271) and a unique communication between the live audience and live performer. Francis Sparshott's description of this relationship is typical: 'in the concert hall even the most introspective performer is playing *for* listeners who are listening *to* him' (Sparshott 1987:89).

Along with 'audience', the words 'collective', 'congregation', 'commune', 'community', 'witnesses', 'body', and 'assembly' recur through the discourses of performance theorists and practitioners. Commentators working in other fields echo this description of a sometimes metaphorical or liminal space. Sociologists, for example, note similar aspects, with Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst suggesting that live performance takes place in a 'heightened' public space where particular rules and attitudes prevail (Abercrombie and Longhurst 1998:40). Expressing similar ideas are those architects who design theatres and concert halls to

aid directly the creation and communication of a sense of community (Mackintosh 1993:128-130). Here they declare the importance of the actual space of the live performance, no longer any kind of metaphorical 'space' but the physical venue, again evoking the experience of physical presence and performer-audience co-presence.

These examples display the conscious articulation and valuation of the experience of performative space. I am interested in whether reviews, in representing the writer's experience of the performance, can also re-present such experiences of space. More particularly, how is the bodily presence and space of live performance manifested in language? I believe that for the review to represent the complete experience of live performance we require methods of implicitly establishing ideas of spatiality and presence in language. To this end, I want to consider methods, borrowing from a phenomenological approach, of evoking space through embodied language.

This discussion of the experience of live performance in space returns me to the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and the embodiment of the individual's experience of the world. As I discussed in Chapter One, Merleau-Ponty argues that the body is humanity's basic mode of being in the world, and that human consciousness is 'embodied' consciousness. We experience the world in a particular way, in our particularly human way, because we experience it through our bodies. Further, the human experience is an intersubjective experience of a world inhabited by other bodies. As David Stewart writes in *Exploring Phenomenology*, 'To be bodily is to exist in a world inhabited by other persons [... O]ne discovers his own authentic humanity only by recognising the humanity of others' (Stewart and Mickunas 1974:63). The implications of these ideas for live performance are significant as they bind the sometimes rootless themes of presence, community, and charisma to a coherent world-view and philosophy. Embodied phenomenology emphasises spatial relationships, particularly inter-human spatial relationships, of the kind that are clearly at the centre of performative presence. My question now, therefore, is whether the bodily and intersubjective nature of the experience informs the language we use to write about the experience of live performance.

In *Music as Heard: A Study in Applied Phenomenology*, Thomas Clifton relates Merleau-Ponty's description of the embodied experience of the world to the experience of music. In particular, he discusses how our experience of music is not limited to the auditory but, like the world, is experienced through the whole body: that is to say synaesthetically. Synaesthesia refers to the idea that emotions or stimuli to one sense prompt responses in another. In other words, perceptions resulting from sight, sound, smell, or touch, and perceptions relating to colour, texture, taste, height, or depth are not isolated experiences but phenomena unified by the human body. Clifton notes that, 'Synaesthetic perception forms an important part of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the body, as a "general instrument of comprehension"' (Clifton 1983:65).

Synaesthesia, therefore, describes the association of different sense experiences. Although in extreme cases potentially disabling, Peter Morris and Peter Hampson suggest in *Imagery and Consciousness* that 'Mild synaesthesias are reasonably common in most individuals, certain colours are often described as warm or cold, and sounds as bright' (Morris and Hampson 1983:110). Indeed, colour associations are among the most familiar of synaesthetic constructions: red is hot; blue is cold; green is calming. Many other common phrases also illustrate synaesthesia at its most explicit, particularly in the description of bodily responses to stimulus that might be empirically limited to other sense perceptions. For example, when we say something is 'cringe-making', 'eye-watering', 'heart-rending', or 'blood-chilling' we indicate how we instinctively describe our bodily experience of sensual phenomena. Either metaphorically or physically, these phrases detail our whole bodily reaction to what might be sensations empirically limited to just one or two external perceptions. Similarly, Franz Kafka describes how the experience of reading affects his whole body, 'I read sentences of Goethe as though my whole body were running down the stresses' (Burnshaw 1970:268).

Additionally, I see the concept as especially relevant to discussion of performance, as the arts seem to encourage synaesthetic comparisons, perhaps because they inspire

their audience to 'creative cognition' (Finke, Ward and Smith 1992:205). Certainly, writers often employ what is effectively synaesthesia to describe the aspects of performative experience that defy explanation. Barba talks about the way an actor's body feels the tension of the audiences (Watson 1995:144); Blau suggests there is a physical force to the audiences' gaze (Blau 1990:6); Beckerman describes how an audience feels through the skin (Beckerman 1979:150). While the synaesthetic bodily experience is something often remarked upon in relation to a range of arts it is particularly interesting in matters of performance-liveness. I have described how we experience performance through the spatially simultaneity of the human body. As such, we attend performances in and with our whole bodily person: we are *all* there, not just watching and listening. Synaesthesia represents linguistically how the whole body and all the senses are engaged in the experience of live performance. Potentially, therefore, the employment of synaesthetic language to discuss performance begins to create an 'embodied' writing that places the reader in the bodily, physical, and spatial location of the performance. By an 'embodied' language I mean one where the choice of words and the attentions of the writer are directed by the perception of experiences as physical and human; embodied language seeks to project such bodily experience of the world. Indeed, much language is always going to be embodied, as its origins (as demonstrated by the etymology of many words and phrases) are already rooted in human and hence embodied experience. In the specific context of the representation of the experience of live performance, these possibilities are worth exploring further, both theoretically and practically.

Clifton suggests that the spatially or bodily oriented terms used to discuss music – terms such as high, low, rounded, pointed, bright, dark, bouncy, rough, hollow – are not merely metaphorical or allegorical, but are the pointers to the synaesthetics of perception. (A good example of a writer using such terms is Andrew Porter, music reviewer for *The New Yorker*, whose work I examine in Chapter Five.) Following Clifton, I would suggest that the use of spatial terms in music criticism is, therefore, more than just the clue to this synaesthetic perception; rather it is the result of that perception. It is language chosen to discuss an experience because of the bodily nature of that experience. Clifton persuasively argues that we describe music in terms

of textures, space dimensions, and bodily located words because that 'is what we experience when we hear durations, registers, intensities, and tone qualities.' (Clifton 1983:69). For example:

the sound produced by an oboe in its middle register is usually described as somewhat thin, nasal, rough, and slightly hollow. But this is not altogether accurate. Rather, these words are descriptive of our bodily behaviour: we have adopted an *attitude* of hollowness, thinness etc. (Clifton 1983:68)

Clifton also presents other examples: we say sky blue is restful, because our body has adopted a mode of restfulness; we say a movie is edgy, because our body has adopted a mode of edginess; we say music is bouncy etc. These, writes Clifton, are not stimulus impinging on the body, but effects produced by the body, without which the responses would not exist. There is nothing in the nature of the sound of the oboe that makes it thin, but only in the bodily perception of the sound. The restfulness of sky blue is not in the colour blue but in the bodily experience of that colour. With some reservations about the degree of application, I would agree that we could usefully see such words as more than metaphorical, just as the experience of presence in live performance is also more than merely metaphorical. However, whether metaphorical or allegorical such terms do have particular evocative use in their relation of experience to the human body. Consequently, awareness of synaesthetic comparisons in language could provide us with a language that accounts for the spatial and bodily experience performance.

I believe that the employment of synaesthetic comparisons could effectively reflect (embody) the writer's bodily experience of live performance. Taking this further, Arthur Koestler and Stanley Burnshaw – both writers with interests in linguistic theory – provide crucial suggestions about what affect such language then has on the reader. In *Insight and Outlook*, Koestler describes the value of synaesthetic comparisons in terms of the opportunity they provide 'for sympathetic projections of emotions, for identification with other selves' (Koestler 1949:319). Koestler continues:

It is obvious that such 'synaesthetic' metaphors greatly facilitate the sharing by the reader of the teller's vision, as more of his sensory fields are mobilized to participate in the experience, which thus becomes multidimensional, fuller and richer (Koestler 1949:320)

It would be possible here to replace Koestler's 'sympathetic' with the phenomenological concept of 'intersubjective'. The projection of synaesthetic experiences between reader and writer is possible because of the shared bodily experience of the world: the relationship is intersubjective. Burnshaw presents somewhat similar arguments in *The Seamless Web*, where he clearly describes (without using the word in this context) synaesthetic reactions to art and the world: 'the entire human organism always participates in any reaction' (Burnshaw 1970:10). For Burnshaw this also includes reading, for in discussing responses to poetry he suggests that the reader 'cannot help but read into the words images of his own body' (Burnshaw 1970:268). The use of synaesthetic, intersubjective language in the journalistic review could produce potentially similar responses to linguistic representations of the experience of live performance. To continue with an earlier example by way of demonstration, the description of the oboe as 'hollow' not only represents the writer's bodily experience of the sound but also invites readers to enter into that experience: indeed, perhaps encourages readers to have that experience in their own bodies.

The significance of these ideas to the language of reviews should be evident, suggesting a method that unites language not just with experience but also with the nature of that experience. We can write about our bodily experiences in a language that allows readers to think themselves imaginatively into the experience: an experience that the body grounds in the physical space of the live performance. Additionally, such language use (following Clifton) is not an attempt to escape intellectual rigour or to avoid dealing with the thing itself. Instead, it is non-allegorical and reflects the bodily nature of the original experience. At least, that is the theory: one with which I have a lot of sympathy. But in the practice of

reviewing, the question has to be how these ideas are realised. For instance, are they present in any form in the *India Song* reviews? I will look at two aspects in the reviews, first description of the performers and later any possible discussion of audience co-presence, evaluating the extent to which such ‘embodied’ or ‘synaesthetic’ writing is present in the reviewers’ treatment of these related matters.

Description and the Performers

Description of performers – in terms of appearance, action, and movement – is particularly intriguing; for it is here that perhaps the most performative activity of theatre might come across in writing. It is possible to see plot as more familiar and accessible as a textual element and not distinctive of the performative. Similarly, static stage objects perhaps do not invite description in dynamic language. However, kinetics, movement in space, and non-verbal interaction between humans are vital components of actors’ performances, requiring representation in dynamic description. Such description could employ, usefully and naturally, an intersubjective and synaesthetic vocabulary to represent live performance as grounded in human bodies and human-scaled space. When the eight *India Song* reviews do consider the actors’ performances, however, they do so in largely evaluative, non-dynamic statements. For example:

Chris Nietvelt’s waif-like Anne-Marie is a performance of real live flesh and blood. (IS2)

Here the reviewer provides unequivocal evaluation – the reader knows that he thought the performance was ‘good’ – but does so by employing imprecise description: the reader has no real idea why Nietvelt was good. The use of evaluative phrases and adjectives tells the reader nothing about how the performers appeared in front of the audience, only how the reviewer evaluated their performance. The prominent and important evaluative function of the review partly necessitates such

assessments, but they need to be accompanied with description that truly does allow the reader an impression of the stage performances.

Overall, there are remarkably few examples in the *India Song* reviews of discussion of the performers at all; perhaps, to a certain extent, the style of the production (which presented the performers almost as speechless, emotionless mannequins) acted against such consideration. While several of the reviews do comment on the device of having off-stage voices narrate the action, few also relate what the actors were doing onstage meanwhile. While one review briefly states that the 'characters mouth to half-remembered dialogue' (IS4), another simply notes 'the action unfolds in front of the audience' (IS6). This does not invite the reader into imagination of the stage appearance and performance of the actors, providing little information of just what *was* going on in front of that audience. Another review provides a little more information:

[the actors] do not speak: they only mime the action as the tale is chorically related by unseen narrative voices. The device is not particularly fruitful: it becomes confusing, and it led the actors here to some ludicrous silent-movie excesses. (IS1)

Here, the reviewer does refer directly to questions of performance: the associations created by 'mime' and 'silent-movie' constructing the beginnings of a description of the performance style. However, the reviewer immediately imposes judgement on these elements: while the evaluative declaration ('ludicrous', 'excesses') is extremely clear, the descriptive content is much more ambiguous. Another example is equally evaluative, but does perhaps begin to provide a more evocative impression of the performance:

Never can the sight of six silent actors drifting across an open stage have been so riveting. (IS3)

The evaluative element of this extract is again problematic: 'never' really communicates nothing except that the reviewer thought that the performance was outstandingly 'good'. However, although brief, the rest of this sentence strikes me as offering the beginnings of a more effective and affective description of *India Song*, inviting the reader to create a picture of not only what the performance looked like but also what it felt like to the reviewer. The sentence is more evocative than descriptive, starting with a sight perception that it extends out from this single sense to communicate the entire bodily experience of being there. The review achieves this first by use of dynamic language in the present tense ('drifting' and 'riveting') that communicates time and movement, movement that immediately lends itself to the creation of space ('across an open stage'). This is a space where, significantly, the viewer is also present: the act of seeing, of being audience to the performance, is manifest in the language – more on the significance of which in a moment. Finally, the word 'riveting' also presents the reviewer's embodied response to the experience, declaring, in an evaluative phrase, that he was transfixed visually and physically by the performance. Although clearly evaluative and subjective, the nature of that evaluation is also descriptive: the embodied connotations of the words communicating to the reader much more than would solely judgmental statements.

Another review also pays attention to the stage performances, first contrasting The vice-consul's 'obsessive frenzy' with the way Anne-Marie Stretter 'moves passively around the men'. Later the reviewer comments more directly on the performances:

Steven van Watermeulen's louche, chain-smoking Michael Richardson [...] is a figure of buttoned-up restraint who only comes alive through Anne-Marie. (IS2)

Here, in the phrase 'a figure of buttoned-up restraint', it is possible to see some aspects of an evocative, bodily language that utilises synaesthetic comparisons and draws the reader into intersubjective appreciation. The phrase uses physical appearance as a metonym for wider characteristics: 'buttoned-up' extends outwards from the bodily experience of a tight top button to convey the experience of constriction, suffocation (literal and metaphorical), uprightness, correctness, and

stiffness. There is a movement here between literal description and figurative analogy: the character is buttoned-up in dress and behaves in a manner that is buttoned-up. It is a phrase, finally, which uses the body as its descriptive focal point and that we are all able to interpret intersubjectively because we all have bodies. (Similar points could also be made about 'louche'.) Perhaps this reading places an unstable amount of emphasis on a single phrase, isolated and clichéd as it is; but it is a suggestion as to how the use of physical, bodily, synaesthetic language can communicate a performer's physicality directly to the reader.

The ambitions of a spatially aware writing should always be to instigate a sense of the performers' presence, and of their movement, in the mind of the reader. I would suggest that the ambition should be to establish in the reader a reverberation of the performance as an embodied and spatially located experience. Readers have to work with the reviewer and actively imagine themselves into the space, but the writer lends the reader both the incentive and tools with which to make this imaginative leap. To accompany this sense of the performer the reviewer should also attempt to establish a sense of audience presence as well.

Description and the Audience

As I pointed out earlier, there are several instances in the *India Song* reviews of the use of words such as 'you', 'your', 'our', and 'us', or else references directly to the presence of an 'audience'. It is worth returning to these now, for they begin to evoke an audience presence and community:

we see all this (IS2)

before your eyes (IS4)

the audience undergoes (IS5)

engulf the audience (IS3)

shakes our sense (IS6)

work on our imagination (IS8)

To a certain extent, the questions raised by these examples are similar to those discussed in relation to use of the present tense: to a degree, they are merely examples of conventional usage; or perhaps they simply acknowledge and directly report the literal presence of the wider audience. More negatively, Kirby suggests that they also represent a method of attempting to elide the reviewer's personal opinion with a pseudo-objectivity based upon the assumed taste of others (Kirby 1974a:60-63). There is doubtless some truth in all of this. However, I also see a more positive aspect to the usage. I believe that these phrases often evoke a sense of the present experience of the event. This is because in identifying the experiencing subject – whether it is 'I', 'me', 'you', 'your', 'our', or the more impersonal 'audience' – there exists a clear focus for the experience. In other words, there is an experiencing subject, a bodily (or multi-body and intersubjective) location from which perception is grounded. The introduction of a verb detailing the experiences of the subject voice then establishes an active dynamism to the description. The *India Song* reviewers write of 'seeing', 'undergoing', 'engulfing', 'shaking', and 'working', all describing an experience that is present, humanly located, all-encompassing, and active. Following this through, it is possible to look at the reviews and pick out words and phrases that employ a sense of the physical to locate the experience in space. For example, one review describes the performance in terms of the audience experience of the stage design:

[you] loll – literally, if you have a seat on the stage – on large black silk cushions, drenched in hot light and sudden inky darkness, bathed in unexpected and intense sounds and smells, experiencing something unsettling and strange (IS6)

Here, words such as 'loll', 'bathed', 'drenched', and 'unsettling' detail the experience and also the bodily nature of and response to the experience. Such words locate the audience in the theatre as present physical beings. In contrast, another review describes the staging in a much more passive and empty manner:

[The stage design] included neon street lighting throughout the theatre's interior; an egg-shaped rug-strewn stage that thrust both into the auditorium and backstage in which sat a further 50 of the audience; a massive ceiling-fan carrying lights and speakers. (IS7)

Although this extract does mention (in passing) the audience, it does not establish it as a human, embodied, experiencing entity. This is not an audience that it is possible to relate to intersubjectively, and, hence, all the other stage elements, although present, are equally passive, unmeaningful, and distant. Compare this to the power of those words in other reviews that in describing the performance also detail the witnesses' emotional or mental response to the experience: words here include 'sudden', 'engulf', 'torpor', 'languid', 'lassitude', 'disconcerting'. Interestingly, a number of these are emotional responses that it is possible to reflect in embodied posture, attitude, and feeling. On this point, perhaps only matters of degree separate words that evocatively describe performance from those that do so in an evocatively embodied manner. The differences are subtle, sometimes to the extent of not being distinguishable out of context; indeed, the differences are always going to be partly one of context. However, as our experience of live performance is one of human performance, the subject of reviews encourages imagination on the part of the reader on an embodied and synaesthetic level.

So, I believe that by first ensuring that the reader is aware that the performance is an event experienced by people, the review resists perceptions made in abstraction. Demonstrations in contrast to this are the (previously extracted) occasions when some of the reviews narrate the plot of *India Song* in extended passages. These often contain no reference as to who it is that the story is being communicated to (nor, indeed, how it is being communicated), leaving the reader with an empty, abstract, and somewhat purposeless impression of the play – certainly not one of it as a presentful event. Establishing the performance as something witnessed grants the play significance through the reported attention of the audience. Without the experiencing entity of the audience, the experience is less than meaningless: it is not an experience at all. Those reviews that constitute the performance as a witnessed

event – especially when they do so in an embodied and synaesthetic language – also present it to readers as an experience that it is possible for them to imagine by proxy.

By combining the two elements of description examined – description of the performers and evocation of audience co-presence – I believe it is possible for the journalistic review to begin to represent performances as live performances and invite readers to imaginatively construct the spatial experience by proxy. Such technique might employ synaesthetic, intersubjective language to further draw readers into the experience represented. Although there is some demonstration of such an approach in the *India Song* reviews, it certainly has potential for development. Unlike my demonstration of a sample temporal review, which drew its content largely from the actual existing reviews yet did justice to the subject as I saw it, the following illustrative ‘review’ is more artificially composed to meet my own purposes. It is designed to place the reader in the physical space of the performance and evoke a sense of the present bodily performers:

With their action narrated, sometimes inconsistently, by unseen voices the performers in *India Song* do not always seem entirely present in the space they occupy. They drift, silently, across the open stage, often appearing to move with unseeing eyes while mouthing to dialogue that is not being spoken. Surrounding the performers, part of the audience is seated on-stage, drenched by the hot lights and sudden inky darknesses, lolling back in deep-black cushions, assuming the same attitude of torpor and lassitude than infests the characters. The stage trusts out into the auditorium, sickly-yellow sodium streetlights hanging over the entire audience, placing them in the same colonial corral of the performers. Scent effects drift round pervasively, and sounds filter in from an India somewhere outside this isolated and enclosed world.

At one stage, the men swarm lazily to an expatriate party, desiring to dance and flirt with weary sensuality with Anne-Marie Stretter (Chris Nietvelt), the French Ambassador’s wife. They appear in evening-wear, The vice-consul of Lahore (Bart Slegers) glowing bright-red in his pristine white suit, his bald-head dripping with perspiration that enforces a deadening lassitude on all his

movements and emotions. The buttoned-up restraint of the costumes clashes violently with the temperature and temperament of the world in which these Europeans find themselves.

The contrast between real sweat, the physical reaction to our actual environment, and hollow society-restricted emotions emerges when Anne-Marie dances with her husband, flowing elegantly but purposely around the stage. The Ambassador is represented by a dummy, also dressed in evening-wear, also sweating profusely, also dumb, with that same blind stare of all the characters. Throughout, the evident effort of the studied appearances compromises any degree of gracefulness or sophistication, brutally undercutting the public façades. It is only when The Vice-Consul's longing for Anne-Marie breaches the constraints of politeness and society that any of the characters seem to come together as people, eyes finally provided with sight, limbs with muscle and purpose, and mouths provided with speech.

I hope that this example demonstrates that it possible to construct a sense of physical, embodied location and space even in the limited confines of the journalistic review. The representation of the live performance that results allow the evaluative and interpretative positions that are present to have greater substance and meaning than uninformative statements merely of 'good' and 'bad'. A spatial and embodied writing of performance would write about those elements of presence that are vital to the audience experience of live performance, thereby better representing the performance as live performance and inviting the reader to experience the event by proxy of the reviewer's own embodied perceptions.

Conclusion: Representing Time and Space

Through emphasising methods of writing that exist but are under-utilised in the journalistic review, I have attempted to describe a style of reviewing that would aid the creation of a sense of space in live-performance reviews. Such a method would be grounded upon an awareness of phenomenological ideas of perception, the

reviewer seeking to use words charged with meaning through bodily experience: words that describe physically what it was like to have the experience and therefore what it was like to be there; words that describe the performers as moving, talking, and acting as experiencing bodies; words that seek to utilise our intersubjective empathy with other human bodies.

It would also be possible to accompany this prescription for a bodily-performance writing with my earlier description of 'processual reviewing'. To represent successfully their experience of the live performance, it seems to me that reviewers must identify key moments of a production that are then described – and, yes, also interpreted and evaluated – with an eye for the processual status of those moments in relation to the performance as a whole. If possible, the reviewer evokes the moment for the reader in the language and structure of the review, attempting to represent in language the emotions and experience that accompanied the performance. In seeking to represent the experience of live performance, the review could combine this 'processual' language with the attempt to establish a sense of space: the reviewer using dynamic words and imagery, synaesthetic comparisons, physical evocations, and empathetic descriptions to establish a spatial presence defined around the idea of being there in person. The reviewer thus presents readers with the opportunity to read themselves imaginatively into the location and moment of the performance. Through such techniques it would be possible for writing to embody a sense of space, to actualise a sense of time, and, hence, begin to truly represent the reviewer's experience of live performance.

This statement marks a point of speculative theory, which clearly requires demonstrating and testing in practice. Elements of a spatial and temporal writing of live performance are present, to a certain extent, in reviewing as it currently exists, as I will discuss in the next chapter when I look at the work of some established performance reviewers. However, as reviewing has not always had the same ambitions and intentions in mind as I have here, in Appendix Six I present some illustrative reviews, tentatively attempting to support my conjectures with demonstration. These sample reviews are presented as demonstrations of possibilities

when tackling different performances (dance, music, theatre), recognising that coping with the practical constraints and conflicting functions of reviewing is as important as a programme of theoretical suggestions.

In this chapter, I have isolated what I see as a method for representing the liveness of live performance in language. In this, I have borrowed ideas from a range of sources and endeavoured to locate them practically in the *India Song* reviews. As a result, the element of practical demonstration has been in detail but deliberately narrow. The next chapter widens this examination of reviews outwards from this close focus and looks at a greater range of reviews. This time, however, I limit analysis to the identification of the concepts and issues discussed in this chapter. So a range of reviews will be examined, covering a range of performance forms, and considering instances that manifest my call for an embodied and processual reviewing of live performance.

Chapter Five: Reading Reviews

My close examination in the previous chapter of just eight reviews of a single production allowed me to identify some of the habits and techniques of contemporary performance reviewing. More speculatively, I described the possibilities of ‘embodied’, ‘spatial’, and ‘processual’ performance writing. This chapter widens my examination to look at the extent to which such writing already exists beyond the *India Song* reviews.

To collect a reasonable, although by no means comprehensive, range of reviews I followed two selection procedures, the results forming the two halves of this chapter. Later I discuss the work of six ‘name’ reviewers, chosen from the ‘great and the good’ of those working in dance, music, and theatre reviewing since 1940. First, however, I stay closer to *India Song* and examine a range of reviews of other performances from the 1999 Edinburgh International Festival. In both cases, I limit my examination to those aspects that I raised at the end of the last chapter, detailing how these reviews communicate spatial and temporal liveness. In addition to description and analysis, this chapter also evaluates how effectively (based upon characteristics previously identified) these reviews represent the experience of performance as live performance (acknowledging, of course, that such representation of liveness is not necessarily the conscious ambition of the reviewers whose work I examine).

Part One: Forty Four Reviewers

From the Festival’s archive, I obtained copies of the newspaper coverage of seven productions from the 1999 programme, with the selected performances ranging from an orchestral world premiere to a re-interpretation of a classical ballet. I obtained 62

reviews, written by 44 different reviewers, and printed by 14 different publications. The seven productions, and the codes by which I refer to them, are:

Dance

appetite (A1 – A8)

Sleeping Beauty (SB1 – SB12)

Triple Bill ('She Was Black', 'Solo For Two' and 'A Sort Of') (TB1 – TB8)

Music

Ensemble Modern Orchestra (EMO1 – EMO7)

Life on a String (LS1 – LS6)

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra (PSO1 – PSO10)

Theatre

The Lower Depths (LD1 – LD11)

Brief details of these productions and the reviewers are available in Appendix Five, along with a brief explanation of why they were selected.

Memorable Images

As I examined earlier, there exists a strong descriptive bias behind the theory and practise of much dance reviewing. One explanation suggests that much contemporary dance, often lacking clear narrative, overriding unity, or established semiology, seems to resist interpretation and evaluation (Banes 1994:24-30). As a result, the objective of the dance reviewer is often description and the detailing of what was there – the first task being to tell the reader what happened.

The reviews of *appetite* are good examples of how contemporary dance can drive the writer towards such predominantly descriptive reviewing. These reviews focus on detailing what happened on stage, examining what the reviewers variously describe

as ‘memorable images’ (A6), the ‘collection of images’ (A1), ‘striking stage pictures’ (A2), or a ‘dense, carefully orchestrated riot of imagistic actions’ (A5). Every review uses either the word ‘image’ or ‘moment’ to discuss *appetite*, the descriptions of moments ranging from the detached and particular –

The most memorable visual effects come in the first few minutes, when a man gathers the huge sheet covering the stage into his jacket, making him a bloated creature, preceded by a women having at least a washing machine load of clothes removed from her cavernous coat. (A6)

– to the listing of examples in fleeting and increasingly impressionistic descriptions:

[...] heavy breathing, distorted limbs, sexual gorging, grave digging, dragging relationships, dough kneading [...] balloon blowing, foot pumping, feather throwing [...] (A1)

But, comparing all the *appetite* reviews, it soon becomes clear that there are huge differences in what aspects of the performance reviewers describe. Each review is far from comprehensive in itself, the reviewers clearly not aiming to describe the whole performance. Such incompleteness is marked stylistically by the impressionistic nature of the descriptions: the reviews describe what are literally only ‘moments’ of the production, selected images that are implicitly illustrative of the overall performance. Additionally, it is also possible to see the listed, fleeting descriptions as illustrative of how the performance itself is constructed from a series of moments. This is particularly so when the lists of images, or more detailed examinations of single images, are allowed to stand more or less without judgement or analysis. It is possible to see these descriptions of images as purposely independent and inscrutable, as if evoking the original moments in the production, representing to the reader the impression created by the production. They form streams of moments, which the mind instinctively struggles to comprehend, collate, and assess. In these examples of temporally aware writing, the reviews do not just describe but mimic the processual nature of the live performance in their structure and language.

Perhaps, however, these reviews do not qualify as examples of processual writing as, with some exceptions, the moments selected are not employed as tools to open out and explore the temporal movement of the whole performance. Instead, it is possible to see these reviews as 'stilling' the performance, the moments isolated like photographic stills, the production envisioned as if constructed, cinematographically, from a series of frames. An alternative possibility would be to trace the performance in images, for example, starting from the key opening image of a man absorbing the clothes into his jacket, which A6 (above) comments upon, and leading the reader through occurrences of the repeated motif of eating that run throughout the production.

The reviews of the two other dance performances, *Sleeping Beauty* and the Triple Bill, both by Mats Ek and Cullberg Ballet, make interesting contrasts. The reviews of the Triple Bill display many similarities with those of *appetite*, with the reviewers largely unable to grasp many of the easy handles of convention, such as plot or recognised semiology. Instead, the reviewers again seek to describe what happens on the stage, providing descriptions of the images and movements. As with *appetite*, this frequently takes the form of listed moments, selected, uncommented upon, and incomplete. The *Sleeping Beauty* reviews, in contrast, have not only plot to discuss, but also the questions raised by the reworking of familiar music and narrative. Many of the reviews devote themselves almost entirely to discussing the relationship between Ek's *Beauty* and that of tradition. In many of these, reviewers only consider particular images to mark how successful, unsatisfactory, or disturbing they find the rejection of tradition. This clearly is an appropriate method of dealing with a performance presenting well-known or classical repertoire; in the *Sleeping Beauty* reviews, however, such contextualisation often seems to be at the expense of consideration of the performance in its own right. Otherwise, the reviews do not use the moments to create a sense of the performance, but as a method of retelling the plot. The main exceptions to this are those few reviews that discuss the production's use of doubling, occurring in scenes of high emotion where a principal character is

joined by a chorus dressed and moving identically to them. Some of the reviews simply mention this motif, but one reviewer pays it extended attention:

At key moments [Ek] creates a celebratory hall of mirrors effect by doubling, then quadrupling, the choreography until the entire stage is spilling over in gloriously infectious paroxysms of joy. [...] As the score soars to its glorious finale [Aurora] realises that [Prince Charming] is her true saviour. At this moment the stage fills with the entire cast dressed in duplicate costumes and sharing in their ultimate happiness. (SB12)

Although this review quickly moves into discussion (and criticism) of the plot, it has more immediately established a sense of the celebratory, loud, large, and colourful feel of the performance. As with other reviewers, this writer argues that the performance is stimulating but treatment of the story a little problematic, but only here is any serious attention paid to the performance; the majority of the other reviewers focus on story. The use of doubling, tripling, and further multiplying of performers is a clear motif in Ek's *Sleeping Beauty*, characteristic of much about the performance. This could potentially be a framework around which to structure a review. Instead, most of the reviews structure themselves around the plot. Although plot, and retelling of plot, clearly does have some processual element to it, it does not have the same communication of temporal presentness that attention to the performance allows.

Attention to, and detailed descriptions of, moments in theatre productions can include visual stage tableaux, movements, and gestures, or even linguistic moments and exchanges. The reviews of *The Lower Depths*, however, display similarities to the *appetite* reviews in that almost all the reviewers relay a series of striking images from the production. Again, the reviewers often employ a list format, consisting of imagistic flashes of the production, with no attempt to describe the whole performance. One review structures each paragraph to relay a different moment from the production (LD6), each as a result is a 'still' somehow isolated and not part of a processual whole. In other reviews the critics select their favourite images: the

flickering candles at the end (LD9), the furniture throwing choreographed to music (LD5 & LD6), the 'penis-tugging' scene (LD1), or the entrance of Luka:

When Luka, a pilgrim, enters the house, his words of wisdom become a pivot upon which some kind of collective salvation hangs as each resident attempts to re-discover their lost dignity. And even after the most extreme suffering, some spark of hope shimmers in the blackness. (LD3)

This *Lower Depths* review comes closest to constructing a processual analysis of the performance. Having selected this moment as the pivot of the production the reviewer could have employed it as the pivot of their review, using earlier images to depict the extremes of suffering and then retelling the moments afterwards indicating the flickering of hope. As a result, the review's structure would mimic that of the performance, the reader's movement through that structure representing the temporal flow of the performance.

The musical equivalent of the memorable dance or theatre image could be to draw attention to a repeated motif, a climatic sequence, a change in tempo, or key emotional moment in a concert. One review of *Life on a String* draws such attention to composer Qu Xiao-song's use of single or extended notes in a manner underlining the temporal frame of the performance:

Qu likes to make a single sound, a bass-drum beat or a bell stroke, and then leave a moment for us to digest to. Sometimes the strings hold a chord [...] while the soloist proceeds, singing and talking without regard to the background. (LS5)

This attention to a specific moment in the music is also present in some of the reviews of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra: 'the adagietto was an oasis of intimate romantic and musical exchange' (PSO7) or 'the most disappointing episode of all was the Adagietto [which] scarcely touched on the intimacy that this movement is all about' (PSO5). These two examples are particularly interesting in terms of the tense in which they grammatically place such moments. They both place the

performance in the past tense (the adagietto 'was'), but the second example immediately proceeds to establish the work of music in the continuing present tense (the music 'is'). There is logic to this: constructing music in score as something always there, always the same, and music in performance as something ephemeral that may change radically or subtly between different renderings. The use of present tense marks the 'eternal score'; the past tense registers disappearance and change. There is also, however, something abstracted to it, the reviewer appearing as a detached, omnipresent entity looking over the performance and judging it against eternal standards. The performance is measured against a single, static understanding of the score; the score is the music, and the performance grammatically positioned as merely incidental. In contrast, the only Pittsburgh review to capture the temporal flow of the music in its structure and language is the only one written entirely in the present tense. In *PSO2*, the hero of the night 'is' the conductor, who 'marshals' the orchestra, and 'takes his time'. Throughout, both the event and the music is current: 'carries', 'brews', 'creates', 'charges', 'is a first class performance'. The review presents itself as contemporaneous with the performance, inviting the reader to occupy the same position, same time, and same space as the performance and reviewer.

In contrast to the music reviews, the dance and theatre pieces are written consistently (with only occasional exceptions) in the present tense. This replicates what I discovered with the *India Song* reviews and while the use of the present tense is logically a little odd it clearly reflects an established convention. The technique also helps produce for the reader a sense of the performance as a present and thereby vibrant and relevant event. For example: 'Almost immediately it becomes apparent', writes one dance reviewer, 'that this is not going to be dancing in any conventional sense' (A8). Here it is not just the performance, the movement, and the action on the stage that is in a continuing present tense but the entire event. Evidently, as I discussed in Chapter Four, the concept of the performance 'run' is significant here, perhaps particularly in the different conventions between reviewing dance or theatre and reviewing music: while the staged performances were presented in Edinburgh on at least two nights, the concerts were only performed once. Even this, however, is not

absolute, for the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra performed exactly the same concerts of music at the BBC Proms in London the week following their Edinburgh performances (Royal Albert Hall, 24 & 25 August 1999). These London performances, identical in programme to those in Edinburgh (just like a dance or theatre run), were reviewed for a second time by all the English newspapers – the distinction between such a concert ‘tour’ and the dance or theatre ‘run’ is surely impossibly subtle.

Given the other challenges of constructing a temporal writing (and putting aside evocation of the performance ‘run’), perhaps it is possible to overplay the significance of the tense employed by the reviewer. Yet I do believe that this simple shift of key, from past to present, represents a significant shift of tone in the whole review and redirects the emotional and sensual focus of the reader. The use of present tense is, therefore, a rhetorical device to encourage vividness in the review, but which can also aid the more profound and ideological communication of temporal liveness through ‘processual’ writing.

The Memorable Event

As well as describing memorable images on the stage, many of the reviews also pay attention to the performance as an event in itself. Description of the time, place, and atmosphere of the performance is clearly a method of communicating that the reviewer was witness to a live performance. Specific location, specific place, specific feel, the collected audience, and the ritual of the theatre all build towards creating a real sense of both momentousness and also of spatiality. It is unsurprising, therefore, that many reviewers comment on and discuss the performance as an event. Often this is in passing, simply a factual matter of when and where, but on occasion it is in extended detail and it can successfully create a sense of presence:

From the moment you see that the on-stage seating arrangement for the orchestra actually makes up the set for this production from the Amsterdam-based Nieuw

Ensemble, you realise that this is going to be no ordinary opera performance. This feeling is only confirmed when the ensemble members come pacing slowly in, clad in black gowns and black conical Chinese hats, to take their places in the austere square formed by the angular stalls. (LS3)

Here the reviewer attempts to invite the reader into the audience with the repeated word 'you'; the use of the present tense ('is') establishing this as a present and unfolding image. The performers' entrance is a memorable image in itself, and one related carefully in terms of the physical shapes and colours – 'conical', 'black', 'slowly', 'austere', 'square' – which assume a synaesthetic-like reference to visual appearances, audience reactions, and the musical experience. With the language always working to the same end, with repeated and clear methods, this description evokes a powerful sense of the event, and invites the reader to imagine that they are present at this live performance.

The opening moment of a performance is clearly a good image to select to evoke a sense of occasion and of being there. From the *Lower Depths* reviews, some more examples:

The audience fell silent even before the house lights dimmed for a remarkable performance. A scene had already begun in which nothing was said, very little moved and grief wafted across the auditorium. (LD10)

This review quickly grabs the reader's attention, highlighting the unusual silence that marks this down as an important and particular event. Intriguingly, another reviewer describes the effect of the opening moments of this performance as equally memorable but rather different. This review evokes a sense of the live event, in particular the sense of tension created by the physical presence established between the performers and the audience:

The play is set in a night shelter, inhabited and run by people who have lost their way in life and have nothing left to sustain them emotionally. As the audience

enter the theatre, the curtain is already raised and the cast are mooching around the set staring around without purpose or even interest. The effect on the first-night audience was quite spectacular. They chatted to each other mercilessly, looked up at the ceiling, even stood up and turned their back to the stage to see if their pals were in – anything not to look at the stage. (LD4)

Is it possible, however, that only occasions of the unexpected or accidental are notable as memorable events? The reviewer clearly cannot attend every performance with the wonder and excitement of the first time: such pretence would soon tire for readers who are not themselves perpetual first-time attenders – but we must also hope that reviewers never become too jaded. This situation may explain part of the cachet (and exposure over the last 50 years) of continually re-inventive ‘director’s theatre’, discussion of which makes seductive copy for the reviewer. Particularly with familiar work (Shakespeare, Mahler, *Sleeping Beauty* etc) the temptation of reviewers is to assume that the audience has seen it all before because they have seen it all before. The result is dependence on contextualisation and comparison to previous productions (asking how is this new?) rather than consideration of the performance in and of itself.

Embodiment

An event has to be located in space, as well as time; a live event located in a co-presence of here and now. The reviews that establish a sense of the event do begin to create a spatial awareness on the part of the reader. In addition to this literal evocation of space, reviews can use embodied language – synaesthetic comparisons, physical evocations, and empathetic descriptions all intended to project the experience of the performance as one directed by the human body – to move the reader intersubjectively into the landscape of the performance. Earlier I examined theories that looked at synaesthetic language in music criticism, so it is appropriate to consider first the evidence for embodied language in relation to reviews of the Pittsburgh concerts.

Although the occurrences are not overwhelming, it is interesting how frequently these reviews do employ embodied descriptions, often phrasing the descriptions of the music, the evaluations reached, and listeners' responses in a bodily language. In the Pittsburgh reviews, the reaction to music as physical is expressed twice in the cliché 'hair-raising' (PSO8 & 5), and again in the phrase 'sent tiny claws running up the spine' (PSO3). (Note 'the' spine and not 'my' spine: describing a communal response or inviting readers to experience the sensation for themselves?) Similar physical descriptions are present in the image 'palpitation' of strings (PSO1), detailing the action of instruments through reference to a human, emotional, and physical reaction. This embodied, two-sided image is also present in a description of the adagietto as an 'intake of breath' (PSO7). More elaborate is the placing of the audience into the space of the music:

We were drawn in to its whirling waltz as if down a long, highly polished corridor along which elusive figures, conjured by haunting woodwind solos would vanish and then reappear. (PSO1)

This is a virtual reality image, where the music creates a physical space around the audience ('we') much as the vibrations of sound in the concert hall surround the listener. It is worth noting that this passage (written in the present tense) could equally well appear as consideration of a recording or as presentation of an imaginative performance of the score. However, I would suggest that the attributes that the writing evokes – space, time, and movement – are ones of liveness. Further, the multi-dimensional imagery constructs the experience as one occurring in the multi-sensed realm of the live; applied in relation to a non-live or imagined performance, such a passage would therefore evoke a sense of 'live-like-ness' – a possibility that I will develop further later.

Accompanying such conspicuous examples of embodied imagery are subtler adjectives, most interesting when the writers describe the sound or instrument in a term that the listener could replicate. These are dotted through most of the reviews:

'wallowing', 'crisp', 'tetchy', 'jaggedy', 'spiky', 'edgy', 'eager', 'irascible'. Similar images can be selected from other music reviews, such as those of the Ensemble Modern Orchestra, whose performance is embodied in words: 'wriggled', 'swagger', 'plummeting', 'puffer and panter', 'chugged'. An impression of physical, embodied music brought together in the phrase 'singing string lines, punctuated by stabbing brass figures' (EMO4). Such language perhaps articulates the reviewer's actual synaesthetic responses to the music. Subsequently, it is possible (perhaps inevitable) for readers to imagine the music through the assumption themselves, bodily, of the mood evoked. Readers know what they feel like when tetchy or eager, and in the embodiment of this attitude are able to access the music through that physical sensation.

One revealing example demonstrates that this usage can be employed negatively, to condemn not to praise. One review describes the music with phrases such as 'corporate control' and 'precision-tooled', images more at home with descriptions of mechanical rather than musical performance. However, while potentially praiseworthy, these images do not draw the reader in; perhaps it is not possible to experience such sensations bodily, only to intellectually understand what they mean. Such a response on the part of the reader, mental appreciation not physical emotion, is appropriate to a performance the reviewer judges as leaving him 'pretty cool, detached, and emotionally, underwhelmed' (PSO8). Such language can therefore potentially communicate both (synaesthetically) 'hot' and 'cold' experiences.

The use of embodied imagery, evident in music reviews, is rarer in dance and theatre writing. That is not to say that there are not interesting examples: 'The Lower Depths does pummel its audience with a sustained hellishness that is by any standards harrowing' (LD8). Generally, however, the embodied language that exists in dance and theatre reviews describes the physical presence of the performer, something worth looking at in its own right.

The Embodied Performer

Although music and theatre are just as rooted in the performer's body and physical actions, it is in dance that this aspect gains the greatest attention. Descriptions of dance necessarily incorporate descriptions of bodily movements and the use of embodied language to discuss such performances is perhaps inevitable. One review of *Sleeping Beauty* makes the bodily connection explicit:

We begin with a happy couple [...] whose mutual adoration is embodied in the frisky steps Ek has made for them. (SB8)

Here 'frisky' describes the performers' actions, but its meaning is also synaesthetic – it is description of action *and* emotion – and intersubjective: 'we' being able imaginatively replicate the movement and emotion in our own bodies. Other words used in the dance reviews – 'gawky', 'slithery', 'waddles' – employ similarly embodied language.

The detailed description of the performer's bodily appearance that dance often demands evokes the performance as something (being) done by people and invites the reader into intersubjective imagination of the performers' presence. Certainly, bodily description defines the performance as an event in human scale, occurring in space. When one reviewer of *Sleeping Beauty* lists some repeated movement-motifs made by the performers, readers are able to recreate imaginatively those movements in their bodies. In doing so, readers access the space of the performance:

Head-wagglings, hand-flickerings, turkey-neck thrustings, spiced with bottom-scratchings, nose-wipings (SB7)

Added to the space occupied by the performer, reviews often recreate the performance space itself by placing the human figure in context:

As we enter the Festival Theatre, we are greeted by a static stage picture. The floor and back wall are covered in white cheese-cloth. A trio of performers are scattered around this space posed like statues. (A8)

What 'we' all instinctively know about the scale of the human body, added to the word 'scattered' and its implication of sparseness, creates for the reader a strong impression of the stage appearance. Readers are able to imagine being the 'we' who entered the space, scaled alongside the performers. Similarly, in a review of the Cullberg Ballet Triple Bill:

As the curtain rises, a man in a black-and-blue suit and a woman in a bull's-eye dress are grinding their pelvises on diagonally opposite sides of a coldly exposed stage, littered with fragments of scenery. (TB6)

In contrast to dance, orchestral music reviews rarely offer any direct reference to the fact that there were musicians on the stage. Reviewers might mention the name of a soloist, but generally, the impression is of disembodied instruments and a collected (somewhat amorphous) orchestra. The idea that the music is something 'done' by the human body, sound created by breath or movement, is more-or-less absent. To the concert audience, the embodied nature of the music is plain: the orchestra laid out before them, the movements evidently rooted in the body, the sound clearly human in origin. Yet the importance of this to the experience of the music is underplayed or neglected in reviewing. But how, without laboriously reminding readers in every review that there are people playing these instruments (which would be explicit but hardly interesting or embodied writing), is the reviewer to convey this aspect? One thought could be that the embodied language used to describe the music, and the audience's embodied response to it, could also describe the performers. However, while the image of 'eager' woodwind describes the quality of sound in an empathetic manner that allows the reader to access the experience, I am not sure it describes the physicality of the performers. For that 'eager' sound can, of course, be produced by an apparently impassive musician who may even be very bored, and doing it all through formal technique.

One device some of the music reviewers employ is to implicitly elect the conductors as not just the leaders of their orchestras but also as the representative of the orchestras' embodiment. Even here reviewers rarely physically evoke the conductors – here Mariss Jansons and John Adams – but instead demonstrate (often in metaphorical and temporal terms) a sense of the conductor's presence: 'he takes his time', 'he marshalls [sic] his troops', the orchestra is 'under' the conductor, he 'pulled the music around all over the place, as though he were making it up as he went along', 'he flung his arms high and wider'. In these instances the music is indeed being conducted (being done) for the audience. In the case of the PSO many reviewers also refer to Jansons' history of poor health, often as a metaphor for the failings of the orchestra – a case perhaps of 'romantic' pathology: the dynamic artist as cardio-patient.

The Shock of the New

Sometimes a performance comes along that strikes even the most hardened of reviewers as something memorable. One such performance was the world premiere of Michael Gordon's *Sunshine of your Love*, part of the Ensemble Modern Orchestra concert. The reviewers' responses to this piece offer a chance to review several aspects of the previous analysis in microcosm.

The reviews present Gordon's short but fairly monumental composition as a momental and memorable event in itself. The piece provokes many of the reviewers to try to evoke the sense of being there, raising the passion and vibrancy of their writing several-fold. In the attempt to describe the music and the experience, the reviewers reach for a range of techniques including the clichéd or mundane image ('the massive wall of sound' EMO6), or the relation of the music to something completely unlike music ('the sound of a subway train approaching down the tunnel' EMO5). One reviewer seeks out the pithy critical putdown, complete with overdone alliteration:

The orchestra rushed headlong through eight minutes of quivering quavers quite unmolested by melody, drama or harmonic interest. (EMO1)

Another review attempts to evoke a sense of the whole experience in one sentence:

Strings screeched, guitars hummed angrily, and just as the pounding insistence began to get wearisome, Gordon had the wit to end it with jolting suddenness. (EMO4)

As in these fragmented examples, many of the writers employ embodied language and synaesthetic comparisons ('pounding' and 'pulsating'). Many reviews also include literal descriptions of the music's physical presence and physical impact on the listener ('the work was a real eye-opener', 'it blew my socks off', and 'literally shaking').

Even within these clichés, witticisms, and attempted crushing put-downs, the Gordon piece inspired many reviewers to use what I would describe as embodied language and momental description (if not processual, but then the piece was fairly short). In many of the reviews, the language used about *Sunshine of your Love* highlights, by way of contrast, the cooler and less involved writing used for the other pieces of music performed by the orchestra. Even in the many cases when the other works were clearly more important to the reviewer, they seem less real to the reader: in many respects simply less live. The allure of the world premiere and shock of the new marked *Sunshine of your Love* with an urgency and 'firstness' that had a striking impact on all its reviewers. Whether considered negatively or positively as music, the result was the inspiration of reviews that presented the performance to readers unquestionably and utterly as something experienced live.

Part Two: Six Reviewers

The intention in this section is to look at how the ‘great and good’ of live-performance reviewing have gone about their task; looking, in particular, at the extent to which they demonstrate a spatial and temporal performance writing. Out of all the possible post-war reviewers, I selected six, chosen because they are well known, respected, and because their work has been published in ‘collected’ editions. Together these criteria, obviously interdependent, suggest that they are among the best in the business, with the collected volumes representing them *at* their best. The reviewers and collections I look at are:

Theatre

Kenneth Tynan, *A View of the English Stage 1944-1965*

Michael Billington, *One Night Stands: A Critic's View of Modern British Theatre*

Dance

Edwin Denby, *Dance Writings*

Marcia B. Siegel, *The Tail of the Dragon: New Dance 1976-1982*

Music

Andrew Porter, *Music of Three Seasons 1974-1977, Music of Three More Seasons 1977-1980, Musical Events a Chronicle 1980-1983, and Musical Events a Chronicle 1983-1986*

Tim Page, *Music from the Road: Views and Reviews 1978-1992*

Theatre: Tynan and Billington

Kenneth Tynan's principal period of theatre reviewing extends from 1944 to 1963; Michael Billington's collected reviews covers 1972 to 1994. Tynan dominates discussions on post-war British theatre reviewing. Billington's prominence to me is

in part because the paper he writes for (*The Guardian*) is the paper I read and also because he is one of the best-known drama critics of the last 20 years. Their work displays a number of similarities and a range of mirrored themes and shared techniques.

In *One Night Stands*, Billington observes that Tynan's reviewing concentrates on the acting and the physical attributes of great actors (Billington 1994:8). However, Billington himself also focuses on the physicality of the performers he reviews. In both Billington's and Tynan's reviews it is possible to select passages, sentences, and fragments illustrating this often tight focus on actors and their corporeality. This idea exists in the very grounding of their theatrical theory, where acting is physical presence to the extent that Billington writes: 'Like all remarkable performers Eduardo De Filippo [...] leaves behind an ineradicable physical imprint' (Billington 1994:14). He similarly observes that Albert Finney has 'the born actor's capacity to leave behind an indelible physical image' (Billington 1994:44). Theatre, for these reviewers, is the physical and emotional presence of actors; great theatre is to be in the presence of great actors. Both Billington and Tynan do consider the actors' performances alongside other elements of the performance, particularly the play-script but also direction, set design, costume etc. However, as noted in Chapter Four, this consideration is often in a manner of 'horizontal analysis' with each element of the production considered separately, a technique that can militate against the reader's perception of the performance as a temporally occurring process. Instead, it is frequently only the actors, presented in a dynamic language resonant with movement and action, that effectively conveys the status of the performances as one located in time and space.

Tynan's evocations of actors and acting are splendidly lyrical outbursts: they read as if possessed by the force that propelled the original performance. In Tynan's descriptions, meaning, emotion, and action are entwined together in the bodily being of the performer. Moreover, Tynan's writing re-presents this presence through the prism of memory recalled: the reader is given access to Tynan's eyes and invited to

see as he saw. Illustrative of this is a description of Ralph Richardson as Falstaff in *Henry IV* in 1946:

[He] never rollicked or slobbered or staggered: it was not a sweaty fat man, but a dry and dignified one. As the great belly moved, step following step with great finesse lest it overtopple, the arms flapped fussily at the sides as if to paddle the body's bulk along. (Tynan 1984:31)

This passage operates on a number of levels. The humour is both subtle and clichéd: Tynan renders the fat man of comedy with dignity, but at once disallows that dignity. The description calls on the reader's knowledge of the play, yet denies that knowledge and suggests something new: Tynan familiarly evokes Falstaff's great belly, but also allows it 'great finesse'. The language embodies the physical impression even in relation of what Falstaff did not do: the words 'rollicked', 'slobbered', and 'staggered' are dynamic, kinaesthetic of a large and particularly weighty dynamism. This description allows readers to place themselves intersubjectively in the role of the great fat man and at the same time in the role of the onlooker. The passage inspires a false, or rather imagined, feeling of recollection in the mind of the reader. Embodied language re-presenting embodied performers, Tynan's reviewing of the performer does, as here, evoke a powerful sense of spatial presence: this *is* bodily performance writing.

Tynan's descriptions of actors' performances can be general, as about Richardson's Falstaff, but are often particular in the detailing of movement, or appearance, at a specific moment of a production. From the same review, Tynan describes Laurence Olivier's presentation of a stammering Hotspur:

Here the face almost burst for frenzy: the actor stamped the ground to loosen the word from his mouth. Finally, in a convulsion of contempt, it sprang out. (Tynan 1984:32)

Here Tynan's bodily writing edges towards a partnering evocation of temporality. Certainly, this is a description of a moment, and an attempt to represent that moment in language. The review bases analysis around physical description and appearance, grounding meaning in physicality, and is effective because it seeks to allow readers to imagine themselves into the mind of the viewer and bodily into the place of the performer. Rarely, however, does Tynan seek to extend these moments out to detail the processual status of the performance as a whole. The reader may assume that this detail is key to the production simply because it is the moment the writer chooses to focus upon; but there is no invitation here to imagine the play unfolding as whole. Another example, from a review of George Ralph as Subtle in *The Alchemist* in 1947, illustrates a more successful evocation of both physical presence and temporal significance:

I remember vividly the slow, jovial smile of anticipated triumph which greets the news of some new arrival to the cozenage; his eyes pop with avidity. (Tynan 1984:66)

It is worth dwelling on some of the techniques displayed here. The description of the moment through the eyes of the reviewer invites the reader to enter the experience of being there physically. The passage also invites the reader to adopt the physical being, appearance, and sensations of the performer. It is also a description of a moment and (as with the previous example) must therefore contain a sense of movement and progress: particularly, the evocation of anticipated triumph hints towards future moments. It is interesting here that 'I remember' seems to unequivocally place the performance in the past, while 'greets' and 'pop' are in the present – perhaps suggesting the continuing presentness of the performance in the recalled imagination.

Billington's descriptions of actors' performances rarely have the same dramatic intensity of Tynan's writing. However, he does often employ similar techniques for similar ends. Detailing Nicol Williamson's performance as Uncle Vanya in 1974, for example, Billington writes:

he goes brick-red with impotent fury, he makes short, nervous, stabbing gestures at the Professor and essays aimless kick like a thwarted infant. [... H]is body straightens, his eyes bulge and you feel confronted by temporary insanity.
(Billington 1994:59)

Here, as in Tynan's reviews, physical appearance is the grounding of analysis. Billington's language seeks to embody its meaning in empathetic detail; in the same review he describes Williamson's 'gangling' body and 'shambling figure'. The review presents this description as both a general appearance and a particular moment: a selected and illustrative instance of the whole. Billington's use of the word 'you' here (and elsewhere: 'if you listen' or 'it gives you') seeks to tie the reader into his seat, to invite the reader to experience the review as audience to the performance. Similarly, his descriptions of actors often links their physical performance to the physical presence of the audience: 'we, the audience, sit a few feet away', 'as we enter', or 'we realise he speaks the blunt truth'. In this last example, Billington clearly blurs objective reporting of audience responses and the positing of an individual interpretation onto the audience as a whole.

Billington's physical evocations of actors' performances are generally more fragmented than Tynan's tours de force, and more easily illustrated by such fragments. Billington usually describes actors in physical terms, 'shy, gawky, repressed' or 'short-legged, broad-bottomed, crab-gaited and moon-faced' (Billington 1994:86). His reviews frequently select a single moment or single movement from the production to detail an actor's whole performance. For example, Ian McKellen assumes a 'poker-faced stance' as Macbeth and when confronted by Banquo's ghost, 'the long jaw slackens and judders, the cheeks puff in and out like bellows, the mouth foams as a once whole man is reduced to epileptic frenzy' (Billington 1994:87). Elsewhere, Billington details Frankie Howerd's 'unflagging presence' as 'lips constantly pursed [...] tongue flicking out like an iguana's and a look of unspeakable affront crossing those lugubrious features' (Billington 1994:37). As in some of these illustrations, Billington does employ empathetic language – such

as 'nervy', 'readily helpless', 'scalding intensity', and 'bottled-up' – with the invitation to intersubjective reading clearly open.

Dance: Denby and Siegel

The first dance reviewer I consider is Edwin Denby, whose best-known material was published in the *New York Herald Tribune* between 1942 and 1945. In addition, I look at the work of Marcia B. Siegel, who since the late 1960s has reviewed for publications including *The Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Soho Weekly News*.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these dance reviewers show a tendency, like Billington and Tynan, to focus on performers' physicality. Denby, in particular, manifests this often very tight focus on dancers' appearance and movement. Attention to the figure of the dancer recurs again and again in his reviews, as in a description of Anna Sokolow in 1943: 'Her figure with the small head, the solid neck, the small sloping shoulders and elongated limbs was immediately touching' (Denby 1986:181). Denby's descriptions of performers' bodies stem from (and underline) the nature of dance where the performance is determined by the body of the performer. The importance of this is in evidence in a description of Tamara Toumanova in 1944, 'with her large, handsome, and deadly face, her sword-like toe steps, her firm positions, her vigorous and record-high leg gestures' (Denby 1986:254). And again, in a description of Merce Cunningham from a 1968 article: 'At first he was quite extraordinary because of the sloping shoulders and long arms and long legs' (Denby 1986:406). Although these kind of intense bodily descriptions are certainly a trademark feature of Denby's reviewing, they are in evidence in the work of other writers. Denby's writing, however, is perhaps unusual in the intensity of his gaze. More typical is the fleeting glimpse of the performer provided by a contemporary reviewer of Cullberg Ballet, whose gaze lightly touches upon the performer's appearances, noting a 'big, luscious Monica Mengarelli and smallish Boaz Cohen' (TB8). Set amongst Denby's explicit and detailed evocations, however, this really tells the reader very little.

Denby's minute attention to physicality, therefore, points towards the prerequisites of dance, establishing how the movement emerges from the dancers' bodies. On occasions, additionally, Denby combines this careful description of dancers' bodies with attention to the movement sequence performed. It is here that his reviews really begin to match physicality to performance. Reviewing a performance of Balanchine's *Concerto Barocco* in 1945, for example, Denby writes:

At the climax, for instance, against a background of chorus that suggests the look of trees in the wind before a storm breaks, the ballerina, with limbs powerfully outspread, is lifted by her male partner, lifted repeatedly in narrowing arcs higher and higher. Then at the culminating phrase, from her greatest height he very slowly lowers her. You watch her body slowly descend, her foot and leg pointing stiffly downward, till her toe reaches the floor and she rests her full weight at last on this single sharp point and pauses. (Denby 1986:321)

Denby's description is precise and exacting: it puts movement in place, in the body, and in time. The passage is grounded in the dancer's physical being with the stress on 'weight' and 'powerfully' in this review particularly telling.

Another example, again Toumanova:

[Toumanova] was at her worst: careless feet, limp and wormy arms, brutally deformed phrasings; in allegro she was a hoyden, in adagio it was a bore waiting for her to get off that stubby toe; she waddled complacently, she beat time, she put on a tragically wronged stare (Denby 1986:367)

This review is in part typical of Denby, particularly the exacting attention to the dancer's body. However, the passage is also atypical, the language being more virtuoso, with 'wormy', 'stubby', and 'waddled' really allowing the reader a physical knowledge of the performance. The review is also atypical (for Denby) in its

negativity. But the unusual language should draw attention to the fact that all is not as it seems, and Denby continues:

It upset me while I was in the theater; but the next day it seemed only ridiculous, I'd half forgotten it, and it had no connection with moments I couldn't help remembering the grandeur of: a few terrifying extensions, a few incisive strokes that counted phenomenally. At those moments she had so much vitality she made everyone else look as if they merely crept or scuttled about her while she danced. (Denby 1986:367)

The sense that Denby creates is one of experiencing a performance on all of its multiple and complex levels: physically, mentally, and now in memory. He invites the reader to experience the event as an event and as he experienced it. There is in this review a definite sense of space (created through the physical description of the performer) accompanied by a sense of time – particularly of the time over which the audience experiences the performance – which is subsequently made sense of in the memory.

With classical dance, interest in the development of balletic tradition leads the reviewer to focus on dancers' physical interpretation of technical movements. The reviewer of new dance-works also often focuses on dancers' physical bodies, although now for different reasons. Marcia Siegel suggests that modern dance is often closely identified with its creator and their bodily shape and movements. Consequently, in her reviews, Siegel describes the body of the modern dancer with an attention to detail almost as intense as that which Denby focuses on classical dancers. The difference is that, while Denby might have been concerned with how the dancer affected the dance, the key factor for Siegel is how the dancer determines the movement. Given the range of twentieth-century dance choreography, different parts of the body may now be of interest and different movements performed, calling on a very different kind of physical description on the part of the reviewer. For example, Siegel describes dancer Judy Padow as

small, with a thin, flat body that shows little of the refinement that usually comes from dance training. She doesn't have that high muscle tonus, that readiness and sense of reserved power you see in other dancers. Her body looks put together with soft, weightless things like marshmallows. (Siegel 1991:46)

Described in contrast to the typical dancer, Padow is soft and weightless where Denby's dancers were powerful and weighty; and it is difficult to imagine Denby positively comparing a dancer's body to marshmallows. Elsewhere Siegel describes dancers as angular, even awkward, jarring, and harsh. 'Hoyden', which Denby used negatively about Toumanova, could now occupy a new position of precise and positive description of a certain kind of presence. As twentieth-century choreography has redefined dance aesthetics, so in turn is a new dance vocabulary required. However, while the vocabulary may change, the types of words are similar, all calling on embodied knowledge and synaesthetic relations. I would suggest that readers can feel in their own bodies the idea of 'like marshmallows'.

The modern dance reviewer's attention to the now ever more variable bodily appearance of the dancer has to be matched with attention to the equally diverse movements that appear on stage. Modern dance's rejection of tradition, and the movements of traditional technique, means that the writer does not have a descriptive technical vocabulary to utilise. Without a technical lexicon, and without set moves to notice, register, and assess, the reviewer is dependent on rendering observation into language: telling what happened on stage. Such descriptions seem to aim for exacting observation, description of what happened without judgement – there is often no set standard against which to judge – and often without interpretation. Yet exactitude is clearly unachievable, the observer's eye cannot be all-encompassing, and the reviewer's writing cannot be precise.

As with Denby, it is when Siegel's attention to bodily appearance links to the dancers' movements that the reviews begin to connect to performance and become concrete to the reader – as when Siegel continues in her description of Padow:

While everything else is very easy and flexible, she stiffly pumps her arms back and forth together when she walks, squeezing her chest or upper back between them on each step. (Siegel 1991:46)

Siegel's present-tense description here creates a spare yet precise impression of a particular movement-gesture. Perhaps the language does not translate the original movement directly, but it does create a sense of movement for the reader.

Additionally, here and elsewhere, Siegel subtly establishes knowledge of a sentient observer, making manifest for the readers that this is a watched event and allowing the performance to be experienced by proxy. Illustrating this is another review, of a 1979 America Theatre Lab performance:

Toby Armour began the evening curled up on the floor, and as Busch played short sections from Bartók and Beethoven, she gradually breathed her way into uprightness, and into space, till, as the Brahms began, she seemed warmed up to give a performance. (Siegel 1991:72)

In this review, Siegel again uses spare but embodied language, constructing for the reader the idea of the actual stage of the performance and the bodied space of the moving performer. The sense of progress in this review is also telling, the movement is through space and through time. Words relating to time are prominent, separately – 'began', 'evening', 'short', 'gradually', 'way', 'till', and again 'began' – or together: 'gradually breathed her way into uprightness'. This latter phrase contains many of the elements of temporal and spatial language I have been discussing.

A final comment and final example of dance reviewing: Siegel comments in a couple of reviews on the physical relationship that exists between the dancer and the audience. She observes, for example, that the physical awkwardness of a movement makes her physically uncomfortable as she imagines the movement in her body. In one detailed passage she notes how the rhythmically repeated movements of one performance immediately set up sympathetic response in her own body. She then notices what she describes as 'a tiny hitch in the right-left symmetry of my inner

echo' (Siegel 1991:80) and realises that her body has responded to a change in the performance rhythm before she was consciously aware of it. The challenge is to render such observations of kinetic transference linguistically, a difficult task that Siegel does occasionally achieve:

Seated sideways on one hip, she sharply turns her head and extends one hand in the same direction – and suddenly the room gets about fifteen feet wider. (Siegel 1991:72)

What I particularly like about this example is the concise way Siegel uses physicality to communicate movement and space. It is a sharply observed illustration of the empathetic relationship between performer and audience; the crispness of Siegel's writing allows the reader to share in that relationship. This description draws the reader into the event, evoking space and physical presence through close attention to the performer's body and a sense of process through detailed narration of movement in time.

Music: Porter and Page

The first music writer I consider is Andrew Porter, reviewer at *The New Yorker* from 1974 to 1986. Alongside Porter, I examine the work of Tim Page, who has written for *Soho Weekly News*, *New York Times*, and *Newsday*. The subtitle of Page's collected reviews, *Views and Reviews 1978-1992*, indicates a substantial chronological crossover with Porter, but their age difference suggests that Page is part of a following generation of reviewers. Other differences between the two writers also invite comparisons: while Porter's reviews fill four volumes, Page's single edition is slim; while Porter's reviews are articles several hundred words long, often covering a number of performances, Page's reviews are shorter (typically 300 to 500 words) and narrowly focused on single performances.

It is unsurprising, and perhaps appropriate, that the kind of physical description found in dance and theatre writing is absent from music reviews. However, although Porter pays little attention in his reviews to physical location or visual appearances, he does often create a differently focused sense of presence and spatial awareness. To achieve this, Porter frequently makes use of spatial imagery and synaesthetic language embodied in space. A 1976 review titled 'Pianists and Pianos', for example, continually evokes size, scope, and scale. Porter describes Dickran Atamian as creating 'an illusion of intimacy'; he writes of Lazar Berman as having a 'big technique', with 'plenty of weight' and a 'fat, luscious tone'. Porter also details music itself in terms of 'texture': contrasting adjectives like 'thick' and 'sticky' to verbs like 'rippled' and 'purled' (Porter 1979:298-300). Here, and elsewhere, music is written into a landscape as physical as that of the dancer.

The relation of musical sound to metaphorical physicality, as a result, becomes the explicit motif of several of Porter's reviews. For example, in a review of Mahler's Fourth Symphony, performed by Claudio Abbado and the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1977:

The sensuous beauty of their sound was extraordinary. Every color was clear and full, every line lovingly drawn. And all was in balance. The counterpoints were limpid. There was unusual depth to the sonic picture: some music seemed to come from far, far away, some to spring up under one's feet, and everything conspired to create a world of marvels among which a listener was not lost but led to live an intenser life. Hall, orchestra, conductor, audience disappeared in sound. (Porter 1981:38)

Here music has (synaesthetically) colour, lines, depth, and distance. Elsewhere, as music 'engulfs' the audience or is 'shaped' by the conductor, it clearly also possess physical presence. In one review, of a Pierre Boulez piece in 1978, Porter uses such physical language to contrast the experience of a recorded and live performance:

Pli selon pli needs to be entered as a living landscape. The printed score is a map of its domain, the disc an account of just one journey through it – a journey recorded in fine, clear detail, it is true, but in two dimensions. At the Carnegie Hall performance, *Pli selon pli* was alive, and it was good to be living with and within it. (Porter 1981:128)

Extending out from these evocations of space, the synaesthetic description of music recurs in many different forms in Porter's reviews. A review of Vladimir Horowitz first bends music to shapes – 'sharply etched, incisively sounded, quirkily phrased' – before moving on to human actions: 'boisterous', 'jerking', and 'jittery' (Porter 1979:41). When such human actions are used to describe music, is the implication that the music itself is boisterous, or that it engenders a sense of boisterousness in the audience, or a combination of both? The possibilities are added to by looking at the similarity of the language used to described music, and the words Porter employs to detail the listener's response. Porter often describes audience responses in terms of violent physical reactions, on one occasion 'good enough to leave the listeners rapt, awed, exhilarated, trembling' (Porter 1988:53). When reviewing music by Mahler, which seems to particularly inspire such descriptions, the meaning of the phrase 'shattering' blurs between the music and the listener. Porter describes the music of another performance as 'despairing, insecure, even hysterical' – or is that a description of the listener? (Porter 1988:60). Such descriptions allow readers to imagine themselves into the state of the audience, as experienced by the reviewer. Additionally, they also, because of Porter's extension of such terms from audience responses to the music itself, invite the reader to imagine the music as well.

It is possible to discover other examples of synaesthetic description. Food, for example, mixes with readers' familiarity with the human body in a description of the quality of sound of the Vienna Philharmonic: 'full but not fatty, smooth but still muscled' (Porter 1979:597). The sound of the Chicago Orchestra, on the other hand, is described as changing as its guest conductors change: 'Instead of high-gloss wind playing, there is a warmer, gentler sound' (Porter 1979:267). Locating the signifying origins of these words is problematic: 'high-gloss' refers to paint and to polished

effects, a spatial and tactile image used to describe wind instruments. 'Warmer' and 'gentler' borrow, perhaps, from a description of different kinds of wind, but to make sense also have to borrow from human emotions. The overall contrast is between plastic, artificial surfaces and organic, mutable depths. Again, it is space and human emotions that form the bulk of Porter's linguistic canon. This is an interesting reversal of a statement in one of his reviews that 'forms and feelings and thoughts have all become sounds' (Porter 1979:426), as now sounds are thoughts, feelings, and particularly forms.

Porter's use of such synaesthetic language is his subtle response to the problems of writing about music, of describing the quality of an orchestra's sound. This is a problem that he is clearly aware of, occasionally discussing the difficulties explicitly, asking in one review 'how does one find words to relate adventures of the spirit?' (Porter 1979:427). In another review, Porter observes that 'It is easier to declare a performance ineffable than to find words to describe it' (Porter 1979:599). Although he never discusses possible answers to such questions, his use of synaesthetic language certainly points the way for an effective embodied live-performance writing.

In his introduction to *Music from the Road*, Tim Page also briefly discusses the problems of writing about music, and the need to be both a good writer and a good listener. He also briefly analyses his own style, declaring 'If my writing is tremulous and theatrical at times, I hope there are other occasions when it is colorful and alive' (Page 1992:xii). I have selected from his reviews two passages representative of Page at what I consider his most interesting, and which share characteristics with what he describes as his typical style. The first example is from a *Newsday* review of Leonard Bernstein conducting Aaron Copland's "Connotations" in 1989:

With its granite angularity, its hard, arching beauty, its ferocious dissonances that explode into even more unsettling major chords, and the shattering conclusion that couldn't possibly get any louder and then does. (Page 1992:187)

I am a little torn between describing this as an effective passage, providing a skilful sense of the music, particularly of its shape and of the progression of that shape over time, and criticising it for its melodrama. Physical words dominate the passage, which are then joined by the embodied words ‘unsettling’ and ‘shattering’, ensuring that it is both the music and the response of the audience that is represented. The passage also includes a number of what are clearly, to a greater or lesser extent, clichés: ‘granite angularity’, ‘arching beauty’, ‘shattering conclusions’, and of course ‘cannot get any louder but then does’. There is a theatricality about the writing in the drama of the imagery and in the solid employment of conventions: a critic performing the ritual of criticism, familiar, known, and effective in all its grandiloquence.

Another interesting example was published in *Wigwag* in 1989, and is a review of three *recordings* of Henry Górecki’s Third Symphony:

The first movement, largely instrumental, takes the form of a bell-shaped curve. A canon emerges from the grumble of lower strings and develops insistently until the entire orchestra is singing along. The soprano enters with a brief melody, a setting of a fifteenth-century religious poem. The canon then re-enters, full force, plays itself out, and fades into turbidity. (Page 1992:188)

A comparison between this passage and Page’s review of Bernstein is worth making: is there anything here that, in isolation, tells us we are reading about a recording rather than a live performance? The Górecki passage includes some of the elements found in the Bernstein review: the expression of music occupying physical space is present, there is the possibility of embodied language in ‘grumble’ and the personification of the orchestra in ‘singing’. This piece, like the Bernstein review and all Page’s work, is written in the present tense: suggesting that the recording occupies the same kind of time in relation to the writer and reader as the live performance. There is also a sense of progress and of musical time passing in both reviews. One significant difference here is that there is no evocation of audience, with the reviewer to reader relationship being one-to-one. However, aside from this,

it is only from the literal elements of the writing, when and where, that it is possible to identify that the Górecki review is of a recording. So, while Porter evokes the 'living landscape' of Boulez's *Pli selon pli* in contrast to the two-dimensional experience of a recording, it seems that Page makes no differentiation between constructing a multi-dimensional impression of live and recorded performances. This is not really surprising; after all, recorded music and live music both do occupy time, even if the quality of that time is subtly different, and the envisioning of music (in language at any rate) as occupying physical space is clearly culturally and linguistically engrained. However, as I suggested previously, the description of recorded or imagined performances as multi-sensual experiences constitutes them in terms of live-like-ness. Such writing uses liveness, and the experience of the live, as a metaphor to detail the temporal and spatial movement of the non-live performance – I will develop the possible implications of this point further in my conclusion.

Before then, however, if it is only from their factual content that readers can distinguish Page's reviews of live performances from those of non-live recordings, then how does he communicate this content? While Porter does, on occasion, attend to the venue, and does comment on a concert as a live performance, Page pays far greater attention to these aspects and, particularly, to the performance as an event. Many of his reviews start with or are grounded upon a physical image or description:

Luciano Pavarotti swaggered onto the stage of Madison Square Gardens Tuesday night like a conquering heavyweight, arms lifted high above his head, a 360 degree grin on his face. [...] This was, by any standards, a major event – an event, however, that had very little to do with music. (Page 1992:170)

That many of Page's reviews focus on such an image, describing the performance as an event, is perhaps coincidental with the selection of the more 'lively' reviews – or perhaps not. It would be unfair to say that even the majority of Page's reviews work like this, but a significant number do. They are striking, they make good copy, and in emphasising the performance as an event they do inevitably stress its temporal, one-off nature, and its location in space. Does this, however, as Page himself

comments reviewing Pavarotti, reduce performances to that which was not musical but simply unusual about them? It is possible that these descriptions are not of music, but of events: anniversaries, celebrity performances, memorials, debuts, charity performances, oddities, and freak shows. Page also comments in his introduction on the unbearable workload of the *New York Times* reviewer, sometimes reviewing 13 or so concerts in a week. This means that of all the performances he has seen he can only remember the very good and the very bad. He also notes the difficulties the writer faces having to say something when there may be nothing to say (Page 1992:xiv). This is a problem that can perhaps tempt the reviewer towards easier or instinctive writing (including the familiar or cliché, the snappy rhetorical put-down, or pre-prepared contextualisation). I would suggest that such critical exhaustion is partly the result of focusing on the evaluative and interpretative functions of reviewing, which can lead the jaded reviewer into narrow consideration of what (if anything) was ‘new’ about any particular performance, rather than the representation of what was there. The representation of live performance in writing, on the other hand, demands endlessly challenging reinventiveness on the part of the reviewer, demanding that they respond to the event in and of itself and attempt to translate their experience for the reader in appropriate and evocative language.

Conclusion: Fifty Reviewers

Dipping into an additional 44 contemporary reviewers and a further six ‘name’ writers has usefully extended my discussion of a temporal and spatial language and offered some intriguing prospects. Though many of the reviewers considered seemed to me to neglect the vital element of liveness, in others an awareness of performance as live performance, as occupying in some sense a unique performative time and space, is clearly in evidence. At times this is explicit, present in the content and context of reviews. Other examples of the experience of liveness are deeply ingrained in the structure, style, and grammar of the writing, demonstrated in the syntax of sentences, in the spatial geography of music writing, and in the clear dedication to communicating the presence of actors and the physicality of dancers.

The valuation of the 'live', witnessed in other discourses from academic comment to still photography, is evidently present in the discourse of reviewing.

So, the valuation of live performance as live is present in the written discourse of reviewing, explicitly and implicitly. Collectively these fifty writers display many fragmented examples of a temporal and processual writing. However, this 'live' writing is unformed and largely unconscious; my challenge has been to excavate such techniques and bring them to the forefront of reviewing and attempts to represent live performance in writing. In this chapter I have also suggested that the constitution of liveness in language – in terms of experience grounded in spatial and temporal presentness – is not necessarily limited to the evocation of the experience of live performance. It is possible that presence, processual movement, aura, and an embodied performance landscape can also be used to describe the experience of non-live performances. The ideological ramifications of such linguistic constitution of non-live performances with elements of liveness, and a final narration of the implications of my proposed poetics for the representation of the live in writing, will be subject of my conclusion on 'Constituting Liveness'.

Conclusion: Constituting Liveness

The foregoing chapters have utilised two approaches to issues raised by the concept of liveness, examining *what* liveness is and *how* it is represented. These different questions, 'what' and 'how', require different theoretical and ideological approaches – one ontological, the other experiential – but both are essentially directed towards the same object of study: the contemporary cultural perceptions of live performance. The thesis as a whole has suggested that it is possible to begin to access these perceptions of what live performance is through examination of how people represent their experiences and assessments of liveness in extra-performance exchanges, articulations, and indeed artworks. The choices made in how to represent live performance – whether in talk, marketing, reviewing, notation, or photography etc – reflect what is considered memorable, important, and essential about it. How individuals and groups represent live performance marks what live performance is culturally constituted to be.

The underlying enquiry of this thesis, therefore, has been into the status and appearance of extra-performance discourses, an issue that my exploration has suggested has particular urgency for *live* performance, stemming from three aspects: first, relating to disappearance and representation; second, in terms of constitution and reflection; third, as a result of the dominance of media of non-live performance. First, within a prominent discourse of disappearance and retention, there exists a tension between the desire for live performance to resist representation – and thereby ensure an essential liveness defined by ephemerality – and the fear of the absolute disappearance of live performances, accompanied by the ambition of saving them from oblivion through representation. These two elements, disappearance and representation, continually mirror and accompany each other throughout discourses of live performance. In the previous chapters, I examined how this formulation of the live as 'disappearing' can be challenged, not least by the very existence of multiple methods and actions of representation. The apparently enduring status of the representation can, additionally, lead to its being held not as representing but as

re-actualising the live performance: as standing in the stead of the absent live event. This possibility marks the second significant element concerning extra-performance discourses, which is the potential for live-performance representations to assume a particularly contentious position in relation to their subject, one quickly loaded with ideological significance. Continually examined via the media of its representations, live performance is continually presented – even continually present – in forms essentially different from its own medium of liveness. The method and medium of the representation has a powerful ability to shape the cultural constitution of live performance.

The enduring and potentially constituting power of discourses of live performance means that, between the contrasting approaches of ‘how’ and ‘what’, lies deliberation of a subtle balance as to whether we consider the concept of liveness an absolute social construction or a passive reflection of an essential phenomenon. I would suggest that the balance rests somewhere between these points, at a position of mutual constitution, with ‘liveness’ a social concept founded upon the actuality of ‘live performance’. Live performance itself – ‘live performers in a co-presence of time and space with a live audience’ – describes the factual actuality of what live performance can be; but it tells us little about what is important about live performances, which are the aesthetics, the perceptions, and the experiences resulting from this status of liveness. Moreover, while live performance is a phenomenon of the world, liveness is a phenomenon of culture and experience. These, in contrast to the factual status of live performance, are contingent; perceptions of liveness clearly changing through history, between people, and even as a result of different individual performances. It is here that the third element establishing the urgent relevance of discourses of live performance is apparent: the existence and increasing dominance of media of non-live performance significantly effects cultural perceptions and valuations of liveness. Perceptions of what live performance is, and hence how liveness is constituted, are inseparable from the experience of non-liveness. Representations of live performance, therefore, are a site of ideological and sociological significance where the experience, perception, and valuation of liveness can be seen to be culturally determined. In this conclusion I revisit the ideological

and practical ramifications of the act of representing live performance, present a manifesto for the inscription of liveness in writing, and consider the possibility of linguistically constituting 'live-like-ness' as the experience of non-live performances.

Memory: The Idealistic Approach?

One response to these issues of representation, disappearance, and constitution welcomes disappearance as a positive mark of liveness – the act of disappearance, in a sense, constituting performance as live – and therefore demands resistance to documentation and extra-performance discourses. Here live performance is perceived positively as the 'absolute live': no reproductions or representations whatsoever should be allowed to compromise its absolute temporal and spatial uniqueness. This can be seen as an 'idealised' vision of live performance, where the only criterion of the experience is to be present at the event, to relish the here and now. A logical conclusion of this formulation is that the suggestion that the audience's memory is the only legitimate site of live-performance afterlife. This possibility is most persuasively and lucidly expressed by Eugenio Barba, whose ideas I explored in Chapter Three, as he places positive valuation on the transformative qualities of audience memory. If live performance is valued because of its disappearance, its mutability, its liveness, then memory can be perceived as a more appropriate site for any trace or afterlife than an alternative frozen and unchanging representation.

There is something attractive about such an approach to the problems and tensions raised by extra-performance representations, with the motivation stemming directly from the valuation of live performance as live. The attraction rests in the rigorous commitment to liveness and in its definitive unambiguousness, which presents an ideological and even political valuation of the live. If each live performance exists only in the moment of its own performance, and in the memory of that performance, then its existence only in the here and now of its creation is constituted as something attractively sheer, absolute, and undivided. With unambiguity, however, also comes over-simplicity and impracticality. Memory is *a* legitimate site of live-performance afterlife, and it is certainly one often ignored because of its inaccessibility. But

memory cannot satisfactorily be the only site of live performance existence apart from the performance itself, as pressures existing both before and after the event demand other forms of representation.

Notation and Recording: The Perfect Memory?

There is a long tradition, partially continuing today in dance, of performances being passed down from one generation to another via the memory of performers. It is possible to perceive this process within the same ideology as Barba's transformative audience memory, accepting as positive the mutations and idiosyncrasies of such a human and essentially live system. However, dance is also a form where those interested in its history urgently express concerns of disappearance, founded upon the very real vanishing from memory and absolute existence of so much choreography. In contrast to such fears, reliance on memory as the method of live performance re-performance demands whole-hearted acceptance of its transformative qualities. Or, to put it more bluntly, reliance on memory requires positive acceptance of its inadequacy to do one of the major tasks that western culture currently demands of live-performance documentations. As a result of not accepting this inadequacy, dance has followed other forms of performance in seeking ever more reliable and comprehensive systems of notation or recording, designed to enable its re-performance.

The perception of systems of notation or recording as the 'perfect' answer to problems of live-performance representation has, like memory, its absolute adherents. It is possible to argue that a system, whether mechanical or symbolic, which enables as accurate as possible re-performance is the only form of representation that is required or legitimate (recognising also the frequent anterior function of systems of notation). Such systems can be seen to allay fears of the vanishing of live performance, and might also be perceived as largely avoiding the distortions and corruptions of memory (bearing in mind all the different transformations resulting from notations or recordings previously discussed).

However, while systems of notation or recording do respond to what I have described as the cultural urgency to halt the disappearance of live performance, at the same time they do not satisfy many of the demands of this urgency. While memory is inadequate to the social demand for re-performances, recordings and notations respond inadequately to wider cultural demands for live-performance afterlife. A mechanical or written 'memory' that enables complete and accurate reproductions of performances may allay the fear of disappearance in a grand historical sense, but it does not attend to the requirements of audiences, individuals, and society for communication about the live experience. A manifesto (such as those of Hans Keller or George Steiner) that demands performance exist only in performance (whether live or recorded) blindly ignores the needs of audiences to talk about their experiences and for society at large to represent, translate, and assess performances in other discourses. Further, while methods of mechanical recording or written notation retain performance in terms of appearance, they are far less effective at communicating value, experience, and emotion. This marks the difference I noted between 'documentations' of performance designed to record surface appearances and objective existences, and 'representations' that enable communication about the performance experience. While notations and recordings are legitimate (and vital) sites of live-performance representation, they cannot be the only ones; at the very least they must be accompanied by discourses that make the communication of live-performance experience and perception possible.

The Representation of Live Performance

Even as these issues circle around each other, disappearance and representation should not be seen as antitheses, with the presence of the representation not halting the transience of the live performance. Representation, even in the most authoritative or comprehensive systems of mechanical recording, does not stop live performance from disappearing. The mechanical recording of music does not stop the actual live-performance event from vanishing in its own temporal occurrence: the representation is not the live performance; it is something else. However, while

representations do not halt the disappearance of the live event, they can radically determine how it is perceived – how it exists in its ‘afterlife’. A sense of disappearance motivates the desire for representations of live performance, with representations themselves in part creating a simultaneous valuation and fear of transience (perhaps especially, but not exclusively, since the nineteenth century and the development of photographic technology). This motivation points to how the representations, while defining the afterlife of the live performance, are in turn shaped by the live performance. Even while it vanishes, the concept of liveness continues to motivate and command its spiralling discourses. Live performance, therefore, shapes and in turn is shaped by its representing discourses. This idea draws on concepts of discourse analysis, which describes how the language of individuals and social groups (extended in my study to include non-verbal as well as verbal representations) constitutes experiences and perceptions of the world. Shared language, moreover, establishes and reflects shared perceptions and values of the world. I have demonstrated that in various representations there exist elements, even the conscious effort, to reflect and articulate the live performance as it is experienced, prominent amongst which is the experience of liveness. This is revealed, for example, by looking again at the comparison of memory with systems of mechanical recording.

While memory radically transforms live performance, this is not perceived as a threat to the nature or value of the performance itself. This is because memory enacts its transformation within, in some sense, the same kind of ‘live’ disappearance and mutability as live performance. Systems of recording, conversely, are frequently held to be disastrously and negatively transformative, as they are not operating in anything like a system of liveness but instead enact a system of stasis. Yet at the same time, systems of recording can also be seen as minimising the transformation of the original live performance by recording neutrally, consistently, and unchangingly. Memory transforms, but does not translate the positive valuation of the live experience, of liveness; systems of recording seek to limit such literal transformation, but translate liveness into non-liveness. Such a distinction echoes the split I observed in still photography between Lois Greenfield’s adherence to surface realism and

Chris Nash's attempt to capture experiential existence – one owing fidelity to appearances, the other faithful to live mutability. Given that no representation of live performance can be perfect (as it is not the thing itself) and that all representations must inevitably somehow alter the original event, the question then becomes one of what kind of translation or transformation are we looking for: what kind of 'truth' about live performance do we want to represent?

It is also possible to see the translatory effects of representing discourses as part of the point, for through translation into another medium it is possible to begin to see something more precisely: to see what is valued more clearly. The purpose of such representation is to enable exchange and communication about art in a form apart from itself. To do this some kind of distance allowing for translation and modification is required and valuable. Such representations are not neutral or complete, do not replicate their subject, but instead express what is interesting, memorable, and worth articulating about the experience. Although I am therefore deflating the radical opposition of documentation or disappearance – we can have both – I do accept that an important and ideological relationship can exist between live performance and its representations. It is necessary to ask what kind of trace of live performance is presented, and enquire as to how that trace represents the values of liveness.

Equally clear is the need for live performance to exist in extra-performance representations: for to be represented and representable allows it to be present in the cultural articulation of ideas, of meanings, and interpretations that is part of the nature of art and the experience of performance. Translation into another form enables human communication and exchange about live performance, providing it with an afterlife that is an essential part of the experience itself. The various discourses, representations, reflections, translations, exchanges, and interpretations that take place after the event are a vital aspect to the experience as a social and shared occasion; as an event existing within our lives and not detached, abstract, and untouchable. However, what is necessary is a method of representation that enables communication and exchange about live performance as live performance

Discourses work through conventions, through the shared vocabulary of friend and friend, writer and reader, creator and viewer. These conventions become established in part because of peer interactions; by accidents of form; by intentional innovation; by borrowing from other discourses; or by time. Examples of this include the changing interests and abilities of music notation or the conventions for the depiction of movement in still photography; in contrast video is still in the process of establishing conventions for filming stage events. However, such conventions are not neutral even in media or activities culturally constituted as 'mechanical' or 'authoritative' (which to a certain extent includes all those – still photography, video recording, notation, and the activity of archival retention – examined in Chapter Three). Instead, these media or activities have their own specificities and their own culturally established perceptions; in representing live performance it is possible that these specificities are loaded onto the memories, perceptions, and hence the afterlife of the performance.

I have described one potential result of such media specificities as the representation of live performance by methods that utilise the systems of another form: in a sense borrowing the language (and as a result the values) of another media, discourse, or activity. The discourses of stop-action photography, video-literacy, notational pre-eminence, or archival permanence are all examples of this. Other illustrations include my suggestion that the exchanges recorded in my audience research exercise borrowed from the language of cinematic realism. Talk about live performance is perhaps particularly vulnerable to the borrowing of discourse-conventions from other media, particularly other forms of performance, because of the cultural dominance in much of the twentieth century and beyond of the non-live. In talk, or other media, this kind of 'borrowing' means that the resulting representation can (to varying degrees) approach live performance with the value systems and perspective of another subject. In such cases, it is possible to see the methods and interests of other more culturally dominant media directing the manner of the representation of live performance. With the borrowing of language, and the consequent directing of exchanges, it is possible for the identity of the live to be subsumed with that of the

dominant discourse. It is possible for this to conceal, or at least inadequately articulate, the distinct aspects of the actual experience of liveness.

So, while there is a benefit in the translations performed by discourses, there is still a need to pay close attention to how the discourses translate the live performance. It is for this reason that I extended my description of live performance discourses into evaluation, assessing the techniques employed in various media to articulate qualities of liveness in a new form. What is of interest, therefore, is how discourses re-present the event, and in particular how they represent liveness.

Writing Live Performance

Though I have tried to do some justice to the archival, notation, filmic, and still-photographic approaches to my subject, a particular thrust of my enquiry has been the *verbal*, and especially the verbal in the context of the journalistic review, where the critic-recorder whose medium is words is at the forefront of this issue. In the previous chapters, I examined the linguistics of live-performance writing in close detail, highlighting examples where language begins to translate into words some particular characteristics of liveness. I suggested that the most interesting and useful writing is that which successfully represents to the reader the experience of performance as live performance. My suggestion is that such writing, if fully utilised and established as a shared discourse, would be of great use, relevance, and purpose to those interested in live performance, because it responds to the primary motivating urgency behind its creation. Such live-performance writing would write the live and therefore better respond to the 'urgency to represent' inspired by live-performance ephemerality. In representing the live medium of live performance, such writing would more effectively communicate to readers the particular characteristics of the experience as one of liveness.

A writing of liveness can be summarised as one that focuses on, and communicates the experience of, live performance as an event occurring in a uniqueness of time and

space. This awareness of time and space was the position reached at the end of Chapter One, since when I have traced the constitution and reiteration of ideas of live time and live space in the various representing discourses of live performance. For example, the valuation of unique performative time and space can be found explicitly expressed in written academic discourses, and in the informal talk of theatre-goers ('No-one will ever see that production of *Olga* ever again'), and is also more implicitly present in the ambitions of non-linguistic discourses, such as still photography and video recording. The communication of ideas of live time and live space is, therefore, my 'acid-text' for measuring the successes of discourses representing live performance. Having identified trace, established, and potential elements of language that could characterise an inscription of the live in writing, I hope I am now justified in constructing a manifesto or poetics for a method of writing live performance, describing ambitions with regards to grammar, structure, language, and subject matter. These suggestions are made in part as a result of selecting and enhancing of elements of 'live writing' that are already present and utilised in language about live performance. They are, however, made in the belief that these elements are often neglected amongst the other (sometimes very legitimate) demands and preoccupations of writing about live performance, particularly those present in the short and pressurised space of the review. As Chapter Four made clear, there are many competing demands made upon live-performance reviews, currently they tend to dominant the important representational aspect and it is this balance my suggestions are attempting to address.

(1) Intersubjectivity

The concept of intersubjectivity, at its basis, draws attention to the level on which our experience of the world is a human experience. Particularly, that it is a bodily experience: we all experience the world through our bodies, and it is to such an extent an intrinsically sharable experience. Intersubjectivity roots ideas of empathy, representing an invitation and ability to see what others see and feel what others feel.

My utilisation of this concept is several-fold, borrowing in part on the long emphasis on physical presence in live performance theory and practice. To recap this briefly, it is possible to see intersubjective relationships between the individual performance witness and the performer, between individual audience members, and across a collective audience. Additionally, and vitally important here, there is the potential for an intersubjective relationship between the reader and the writer, and, therefore, by proxy between absent readers, present audience (represented by the writer), and the live performance.

To facilitate the development of a potential reader/writer intersubjective relationship, readers must be able to conceive of a viewing subject: that is, establish the writer as an embodied subject experiencing the performance. The implicit, perhaps inevitable, invitation is for readers to imagine the live performance via the body of the writer – to metaphorically take the writer's seat at the performance. This requires a fairly simply formed creation, in language, of a sense of an experiencing subject: a site of the experience in a specific mind and body, not an abstract, detached, and non-physical voice. It is possible to achieve communication of the presence of an experiencing subject either by reference to an individual or collective gaze and presence, this represents an invitation to readers to the live performance as a human scaled and experienced event. The objective of such invitation is to resist possibilities of abstraction and detachment that can result from writing seemingly originating from a distant, anonymous, and unbodied 'expert'. An intersubjective writing, additionally, denotes the experience as one of people and with people, a definitively live experience, and therefore marks the writing as distinct from that of non-live art experiences.

(2) Synaesthetic Experience

The establishment of an experiencing subject implies physical, embodied, and human perception. As the concept of intersubjectivity suggests, we experience the world bodily, which thereby describes our shared or potentially sharable experience of the

world. Language can seek to encourage such communication, particularly through writing the bodily experience as a synaesthetic experience. Audiences witness live performances (typically, if not always or exclusively) through their eyes and ears, yet they experience it with their whole bodies. Synaesthesia describes the transference of sense terms from one sphere to another, a state where sensations produced by one stimulus are experienced, or described as if experienced, by other sensations. Similarly, the ostensibly non-physical experience of live performance can be described as a physical experience: felt through the skin, touch, or gut. Synaesthesia offers the opportunity for such extension of sensual perception, for a 'thickening' of experience, and for the projection in language of emotions on a level that is immediate, bodily, and sharable. By seeking to use embodied synaesthetic descriptions, writers can present themselves as a body through which readers can access the performance for themselves. By translating emotional and intellectual responses into embodied reactions, readers are empowered to intersubjectively access that experience with their own bodies.

More generally, synaesthetic comparisons provide a broader and more multi-dimensional sense 'picture' of the event being described, establishing a rich and full impression of the live performance. These values – multi-dimensional, richer, fuller, multi-sensed – are values associated with, defined by, and defining liveness. Combined with the intersubjective invitation, the inclination is once more to consider what it would be to be *there*. Synaesthetic writing seeks to resist the impoverishment of language that can result from mono-sensual descriptions, which although might claim to be empirically accurate or objective are typically thin and unevocative. Synaesthetic writing also seeks to affirm perception of the presence of human performers and audiences at the live performance, marking it out as an event experienced live – and therefore involving all the senses.

(3) Embodiment of Space

Live performance takes place in space: awareness of a unique spatial experience being a recurring theme of discourses of live performance. In seeking to evoke a sense of this performative space in language, the establishment of an embodied experiencing subject is the first step: the embodied experience is one automatically read as occurring in space, defined on a human scale, and which is possible for readers to relate to intersubjectively. This can be developed through use of other techniques, once more grounded in phenomenological ideas of intersubjectivity and synaesthesia. The first of these is to provide close descriptive detail of the bodies of the performers. The physical performer, like the writer's body, must occupy physical space: a sense of the performer's body creates, in particular, a very familiar human scaled and human occupied space. The performer occupies space by breathing, by moving, by looking, by standing, and readers are able to directly relate to this occupied space. Additionally, the embodied description invites readers to imagine through their own bodily experience that of the performer, thinking themselves into the movement, actions, and emotions, into the body and into the space itself.

A further method of enabling the creation of a sense of space is by relation of non-spatial aspects of the performance in terms of spatial qualities. For example, we often describe the structure of a performance as occupying a certain shaped space; similarly, the volume or scale of music can be linguistically constituted as spatial, the emotion of a moment represented as textual, or an emotional response termed physical. These are in effect synaesthetic translations, which allow readers to place themselves imaginatively into a linguistically created space. The evocation of space linguistically replicates the all-encompassing perception of liveness, which the audience experience in the space of the performance. Such embodied writing resists abstraction, which can result from writing that undermines such qualities through presentation of an experience as purely intellectual perception. It also enforces upon readers the fundamental importance of presence in live performance, ensuring that language represents what was important to the audience during the experience of the performance.

(4) Processual Analysis

The most dynamic descriptions and evocations of space are those that envision it as existing and changing in time. The witnessing subject of live performance experiences the event spatially and physically, sensations grounded in being there. Readers can imaginatively create these various dimensions of presence. But presence also demands a temporal location, the bodily experience of the world being physicality grounded in time as well as located in occupied space. I have suggested that live performance is often perceived, and processed, as if it were a series of moments. Audiences experience live performance as a continuous flow, but particular moments are selected from the stream of the performance for particular attention. They are the moments around which the audience's understanding, memory, and experience of the event is structured. This is the case both in memory – recollecting an event now finished – and in the synchronic experience of the performance as it happens. Peaks, turning points, repeated motifs, climaxes, and tableaux are all perceived, as they occur, to be of particular importance to the experience as a whole. In relation to dance photography, I discussed how these moments are described as privileged, perfect, or decisive moments that contain within them a narrative of the whole. Just as still photography has sought out these pivotal moments, so can verbal representation.

Description of the performance as a series of moments, segmenting the event in time, does provide some sense of the event as a temporal experience. It also ensures that attention is paid in writing to key performative moments of the production. However, such 'momental analysis' also in effect stills the individual moments. The challenge with the still photography of dance is to make the static image refer to moments occurring before and after, to encourage in the viewer the imagination of movement. In its very different form, the challenge is the same for the linguistic representation of live performance. This is what I would describe as the difference between a momental and a processual analysis.

A processual analysis of performance would attempt to re-create in language the structural importance and experience of the individual moments: not unitary moments but changing processes. In other words, encourage readers to imagine the moment both forwards and backwards into the processual movement of the performance as a whole. Instead of stilling the moment, it is in a sense deliberately blurred, and denied self-sufficiency. To continue the photographic metaphor: it extends the moment out of the single frame. The impression of process that is subsequently inspired in readers roots the description in time and therefore roots the language in the representation of the live performance as occurring over time.

Processual writing demands closely detailed description of the performance as an event occurring and changing in a unique, one-off, temporal experience. Methods to evoke such an experience can include use of the present tense as a technique to draw readers into the experience as one located in a particular and dynamic time. Other techniques include description of particular movements, placed within their context and significance, of contrasts between moments, or of progress and change. Processual Analysis calls for description of the live performance at particular moments on all levels of the performance, vertical analysis rather than horizontal analysis. It should also seek to utilise the embodied and intersubjective language I have previously discussed, drawing readers further into the temporal experience of the performance as an ongoing event. The intention is to encourage readers to imagine the live performance as existing in time. Written representations such as the journalistic review can all too easily, as subsequent creations, present a static, overall impression of a performance, transforming it into something all visible at any one moment, with a one-dimensional existence and appearance: transforming it into something inherently non-performative. Processual writing emphasises to readers the importance of time to the experience of the live performance, resisting establishment of a static and detached impression of performance. Post-performance writing must necessarily contain (and not entirely negatively) some degree of omniscience, which perhaps encourages a static and frozen representation of the performance as if all laid out at once. Such omniscience presents the writer as if outside of the experience, creating a representation that is abstracted from experience and alien to the reader.

Temporal writing would resist such temptations, allowing readers to access the experience through the perceptions of the writer.

Livenesses

Throughout this enquiry, I have sought to establish a definition of what live performance is, in part by using its various representing discourses as a primary source material. The self-reflective question has been to ask what perceptions and valuations of the live are expressed in these discourses, and then enquire as to how, and how well, such representations articulate experiences of liveness. If the point of discourses of live performance is to enable communication and exchange about the experience of the event, then the perceptions and valuations of liveness need to be inscribed in our representations: those representations that better articulate the live medium of the performance better articulate the nature of the experience. My suggestions for a method of writing intended to represent live performance as live are, therefore, the end point of an investigation that has traced the relationship between liveness and its representing discourses. The proposals are not made in the desire to prioritise verbal discourse over other kinds, though I realise I may seem guilty of this by giving such extended attention to it; nor are they meant as a rule-book or prescription for everything a performance review needs to be or do. Instead they are intended more as a provocation, as a demonstration of the possibilities of representing liveness, which in their speculative endeavour illustrate that we must consider how all representations seek to define and shape the thing represented.

However, it is important to acknowledge that these proposals do not present techniques necessarily exclusive to representations of the experience of live performance: they could also be well suited to the evocative representation of the experience of non-live performances, especially those experienced in heightened social-spatial environments (cinema, public presentations and gatherings etc) or with some degree of temporal determinacy (live broadcasts, premieres, news-flashes etc).

Expressions of intersubjectivity, for example, are not made exclusively about live interactions: they also form a vital part of the articulation of the experience of non-live performers and performances. Similarly, the articulation of experiences as occurring in space, though fundamental to live performance, is also found in descriptions of the 'presence' of the film actor and in perceptions of recorded music as tactile or multi-dimensional. Further, all performances unfold in time (even if not in determined time) and many present human actions (which are often located spatially, although not necessarily in a continuous space environment), causing a writing that represents the human experience of performance in time and space to have wider application than the exclusive representation of live performance.

Consequently, although I would argue that the live enhances and emphasises all these elements, the constitution of 'liveness' in language is not unique to the experience of live performance. This is perhaps the case even with home-use of recordings (such as CD and video), where the ubiquity of the media and ease of elements such as pause, rewind, and playback mark the experience as unequivocally non-live. Such media are experienced in a complete discontinuity of spatial order and through varying degrees of temporal indeterminacy – elements which invite a distracted and disjointed 'non-live' experience, a disinterestedness exemplified by use of recorded performances as background to other activities, but present more subtly as a result of perceptions of the non-live as not unique and therefore not requiring urgent attention. Of course, however, non-live performances *can* be experienced on a more engaged level of heightened awareness, which might usefully be described as an 'as live' degree of temporal and spatial attention. The engaged listener or viewer of the recorded performance is one who gives him- or herself over to the experience, following its temporal order as if determined and unique (as if in live time), engaging with the performance as if spatially immediate and present (as if in live space). While the live encourages engagement in a heightened temporal and spatial environment (and the non-live can enact the reverse discouragements) these qualities are not impossible in the experience of non-live performance. In a sense this 'as live' engaged attitude is the 'ideal' nature of the recorded experience, one made with total

commitment and attention to the performance the recording presents, thereby imaginatively constituting the performance with compelling qualities of liveness.

Such heightened levels of engagements can subsequently be reflected in articulations of the experience of non-live performance. Indeed, as noted in Chapter Five, the division between the written representation of recorded music and the articulation of the live experience can be extremely slender, both describing the music with qualities of dynamic engagement, embodied physical landscape, and temporal unfolding. It is worth repeating an example from that chapter, here a reviewer carefully evokes the temporal vibrancy, physical presence, and urgent experience of a live musical performance:

We were drawn in to its whirling waltz as if down a long, highly polished corridor along which elusive figures, conjured by haunting woodwind solos would vanish and then reappear. (PSO1)

As previously discussed, the reviewer describes the music as manifest in a multi-sensual environment, the audience located within the experience on both temporal (dynamic, determinate, processual) and spatial (continuous, immediate, embodied) levels. However, the description could (potentially) also match that of an imaginative, engaged, and committed experience of a non-live performance – perhaps it is linguistically significant that I would describe this as *listening* to a *performance* and not merely as *playing* a *recording*.

That the methods of writing I have highlighted can be employed, effectively and appropriately, to represent non-live performances suggests that perhaps liveness itself is not entirely exclusive to live performances. The precepts of discourse analysis suggest that how something is articulated in cultural exchanges constitutes the subject of the discourse, perhaps constructing the phenomenon as a cultural entity. Does this, therefore, suggest that audiences experience both live performances and non-live performances as endowed with elements that we associate with and define by the live? In a sense, therefore, it is possible that the constitution of any

performance experience as one of liveness is a social perception that is more to do with the vibrancy, thrill, and level of engagement of particular experiences than the actual thing itself: the cultural phenomenon of 'liveness' rather than the 'biological' fact of live. This would seem to suggest that 'liveness', constituted as experienced through both live and non-live performances, is no more than a method of articulating how vibrant the experience of any particular performance is deemed to be (almost a synonym for 'good') and is nothing essentially connected to the *live*.

To an extent this might be correct: the tangle of non-live performances is often constituted in language in terms regarding its originality, aura, timeliness, and artistic presence, all of which can usefully be defined as 'livenesses'. If both live and non-live performance can be described as experienced through degrees of liveness, then this would appear to suggest that while degrees of experience might differ, liveness itself is purely a matter of perception, wholly constructed in language, and divorced from the actual live. This is a somewhat reductionist possibility, which accepts unquestioned that how an experience is constituted determines what that experience actually is, leading articulations of livenesses to merely represent differing expression of vibrancy or uniqueness.

However, it is also possible to argue that while non-live performances can be constituted in varying degrees of liveness, in contrast live performances are actually experienced through the medium of the live. Further, when employed in relation to non-live performances, I would suggest that such constitutions and articulations of livenesses are essentially in the business of evoking sensations of 'live-like-ness' – a 'metaphorical' matter so to speak. For example, the description of the screen presence of the performer is an evocation of live presence; the temporal unfolding of a recording is potentially experienced with a rushing urgency like the actual determined uniqueness of a live performance; a listener metaphorically enters into the dynamic unfolding landscape of a recording in an echo of how live audiences are in the presence of a live performance – all of these are 'metaphorical' evocations of live-like experiences. Such 'metaphorical' (or imaginative) constitution of non-live performances *as live* marks how complete, engaged, or how 'live' the experience is

deemed to be. This represents the metaphorical transference of qualities of liveness (presence, aura, temporal uniqueness etc) into the non-live experience. The reading of livenesses into non-live performances also marks how they themselves are often in the business of representing our experiences of the world and therefore of evoking liveness. Such qualities of known live experiences are then metaphorically perceived (to varying degrees) in the experience of non-live performances.

So, liveness is not merely an expression of vibrancy in performance (not merely a synonym for 'good') but instead represents distinct characteristics of the medium of the live that can (not inappropriately) be metaphorical described as experienced through the medium of non-live performance. Hence, the techniques of writing I am proposing *are* methods of representing the live and of constituting liveness in language.

Further, while the vibrant non-live performance *can* be experienced with a temporal fizz and spatial tingle that leads us to constitute the experience in a manner of live-like-ness, all live performances – including those that are dull and interminable, endlessly reproduced within the hegemony of the performance run, or even those that mimic dominant forms of non-live performance – are always experienced through the medium of the live. With live performance these elements are not merely constituted by perceptions but are also intrinsic to the phenomenon itself. The range and variety of representations and discourses of liveness demonstrate consistent and independent witness to the perception and valuation of liveness. The responses to my own audience-research exercise are one example, where a group of individuals, the majority of whom do not attend many theatre performances and are without any practical or ideological commitment to live performance, clearly articulated their experience of *Olga* as one directed by liveness. What this suggests is not that liveness is an artificial construction or a theoretical definition, or that it is merely a cultural expression of vibrancy, but that it is the articulation of experiential perceptions and values resulting from the live.

Liveness is not the entire point of live performance; but live is the medium that underscores and directs the experience of all live performances. The live – the experience of events as they happen and where they happen – is the central defining element of life generally; that it is also the defining element of live performance marks how and why this is also what is valuable about liveness. Hence the need to ensure that the discourses of live performance have at their heart the representation of liveness. Having first taken discourses as part of the evidence of the valuation of the live, I therefore conclude with suggestions as to how they could better express this valuation. In isolating and describing elements already existing in the best live-performance writing, I believe it is possible to formulate and provocatively recommend a style of writing that demonstrably and dramatically represents the cultural valuation of the live, that represents live performance as live performance. The centrality of liveness to the experience of live performance needs to be reflected and celebrated as live in its discourses, for in seeking a language capable of articulating that experience we get closer to understanding our responses to liveness. Once we can talk about something, and share something, we can really begin to think about it.

Appendix One: Marketing Liveness

The huge amount of promotional and publicity material produced by those trying to market live-performance events represents another prominent discourse of liveness aside from those I consider in the body of the thesis. This appendix, therefore, marks the recognition of the importance of marketing as a discourse in its own right. By drawing together material from the Festival's archives, this appendix also acts as source-bank of additional evidence for several other sections of this project, most notably in its further demonstration of the widespread constitution and valuation of liveness discussed in Chapters One and Two.

Listed below are examples of the marketing slogans employed by the Edinburgh International Festival, they have been culled from newspaper and magazine adverts, from the taglines of television and radio campaigns, and from Festival produced print material. Unfortunately, the Festival's archive has not been directed towards preserving marketing campaigns; instead, these slogans are drawn from the files of the marketing department where they are used to help formulate future campaigns. As a result, the findings only patchily record the period from 1993 to 2001.

Although these slogans and taglines originated over eight years and are related to both individual performances and the entire Festival, there are some obvious relationships between many of them. Many of them refer to live performance as either a special occasion or an event occurring in unique time or unique space. The slogans are designed to highlight the positive value of the Festival's uniqueness, its specialness, the one-off nature of the events, the one-off nature of the location, and, ultimately, the liveness of the performances.

Edinburgh International Festival Marketing Slogans

1993

Edinburgh International Festival: Performances you can't wait to see.

Miss the Edinburgh International Festival and you miss the biggest cultural event
of the year.

Scottish Variety. Only a small variety of nights.

More orchestras than you can shake a stick at.

Scandal, political intrigue and devil worship. In Edinburgh it happens every night
of the week.

It's not every day you can see Verdi's *I Due Foscari*. Just the 16th and 18th
August.

Mark Morris Dance Group. Going Quick, Quick, Quick, Quick, Quick
Verdi's Falstaff. Tickets going faster than Mistress Quickly.

1994

Peter Stein's Oresteia, 7½ epic hours. Better take the afternoon off.

1995

Fresh Meat for Culture Vultures

Miss it and you'll miss the biggest cultural event of the year.

The only UK staged performances of ...

1996

The Greatest Arts Festival in the World

The Edinburgh International Festival. Fifty years of rave reviews.

Celebrate 49 years of the greatest arts festival in the world. Go to an even better
one.

What ever else you do in Edinburgh, don't miss it.
The biggest name in dance. We politely suggest you get on down
Four Saints in Three Acts. Only one place to see it.

1997

Spend three weeks on a foot tapping, heart pounding, mind expanding, emotional
rollercoaster.

1998

Dutch National Ballet does all the dancing. You're the one left breathless.
A rare chance to see Festival favourites NDT2 and NDT3 on one stage.

1999

Join us this summer for a trip around the world.
A Stage for all the World.

2001

You never forget a visit to the theatre.
No-one can forget a visit to the theatre.

Appendix Two: Audience Research – Supporting Information

Olga

by Laura Rouhonen, in a version by Linda McLean
performed by Traverse Theatre Company, directed by Lynne Parker
Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, 4 – 22 December 2001

Olga	Eileen McCallum
Rundis	Paul Thomas Hickey
Ella	Jenny Ryan
Antiques Dealer & Postman	Frank Gallagher
Policeman & Savolainen	Lewis Howden

I selected *Olga* for this exercise largely for pragmatic reasons: preview tickets were available for the 2 December 2001 at a price and time that were convenient. As it happened, two aspects of the production made it of particular interest to the discussion. First, the small and intimate scale of the Traverse Two venue; second, the contrasting age of the two principal characters, indicated in the programme as a woman of 85 and a young man of 18.

Organisation and Methodology of Discussion Groups

Two English Literature honours classes (one in their 3rd year, the other 4th) were approached to find volunteers willing to attend the theatre for free and talk about it afterwards. The discussion group participants therefore consisted of the first available people who agreed to take part. The participants were provided with no

background material about *Olga* and asked not to read about it in detail themselves. The participants were given with little information about the purpose of the discussions, and no indication about the specific interest in *live* performance.

The intention was to prompt a free flowing discussion, without providing information about the particular aspects of their conversation of interest. The main intervention was to begin the discussion groups with a quick exercise, asking the participants to write down their main 'likes' and 'dislikes' about the performance on different coloured post-it notes. These were then laid alongside each other and compared. The objective was to provide an initiative to get conversation flowing round a group of people who did not know each other, and to provide a point to which to return for additional stimulus if conversation ever flagged. Although the exercise did frame the initial approach in terms of likes/dislikes, this was not too much of a problem and matched the archetypal first post-performance question: 'did you enjoy it?' The discussion groups were recorded and the results transcribed.

Questionnaire Details

To supplement the discussion groups the participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire. This included two types of questions: first, quantitative questions asking about performance going habits; second, word association and preference questions. As the demonstration exercise had only seven participants, the results on this scale are fairly meaningless except in being able to relate an individual's comments to their experience and attitude to live performance. Of primary interest here is to stress the age range of the participants – all were in their twenties.

The complete results of the questionnaire are provided in this appendix without comment.

Sex Male: 2 Female: 5

Age All participants were aged between 20 and 29.

1) How often do you visit the theatre?

3 or more times a month	0
1 or 2 times a month	5*
2 or 3 times a year	1
Once a year	0
Less often	1

* Judging from conversation with the respondents, I would suggest that this figure is an exaggerated indication of their theatre attendance.

2) How often do you visit other live performance events?

3 or more times a month	2
1 or 2 times a month	4
2 or 3 times a year	0
Once a year	0
Less often	1

3) What kind of events are these?

Classical Music	3
Folk Music	1
Pop/Rock Music	5
Opera	2
Dance	2
Comedy	4

4) How often do you visit the cinema?

3 or more times a month	2
1 or 2 times a month	5
2 or 3 times a year	0
Once a year	0
Less often	0

5) Do you visit the theatre with friends or alone?

With Friends	4
Alone	0
Both	3

6) Do you discuss the performance with friends afterwards?

Always	4
Usually	3
Occasionally	0
Never	0

7) Briefly expand on your answers to questions 5 and 6 (i.e. Why do you do to the theatre with friends/why do you talk about the play afterwards?):

Results included in full in Chapter Two (pages 119-120).

8) List three words which you most immediately associate with theatre:

Edward: Live, Unique , Vibrant

Elaine: Live, Immediate, Audience

Jennifer: Immediacy, Intimacy, Rigorous

Marina: Concentration, Cold, Expensive

Natalie: Live, Nervous, Thrill

Richard: Performance, Interpretation, Literature

Sarah: Audience, Entertainment, Drama

9) List three words which you most immediately associate with film:

Edward: Recorded, Mainstream, Popular

Elaine: Screen (so not live), Mass-produced (ie lots of people see same performance)

Jennifer: Visually stimulating, Relaxing, Fun

Marina: Comfy, Entertainment, Powerful

Natalie: Relax, Cosy, Loud

Richard: Popularity, Superstars

Sarah: Audience, Representation, Comedy

10) What are your favourite things about theatre?

Edward: Every performance unique, Proximity to action, Possibility of failure

Elaine: Chance to see lots of different actors, Exploration of themes, Glimpse of another culture/way of life

Jennifer: Live performance

Marina: Emotional catalyst, The 'treat' aspect, 'Humanness' of it (possibility for mistakes)

Natalie: Dressing up a bit smart, Seeing who else is at the play, Reading the programme

Richard: Immediacy to cast/characters, Involvement in performance as audience

Sarah: The humanization of it – actors right in front of you, Entertainment, Text

11) What are your least favourite things about theatre?

Edward: Occasionally opaque, Some really bad performance, No guarantees of success

Elaine: Perspective can depend on seating and much you can see

Jennifer: Bad acting, Fakey set designs

Marina: That it is swotty, can't snooze if tired, That it is so long sometimes, That you can't lie down

Natalie: When things go wrong, Maybe not being able to hear actors properly, Being allowed to eat and drink in the theatre, Most importantly, not having a very good seat and not being able to see people's faces properly.

Richard: —

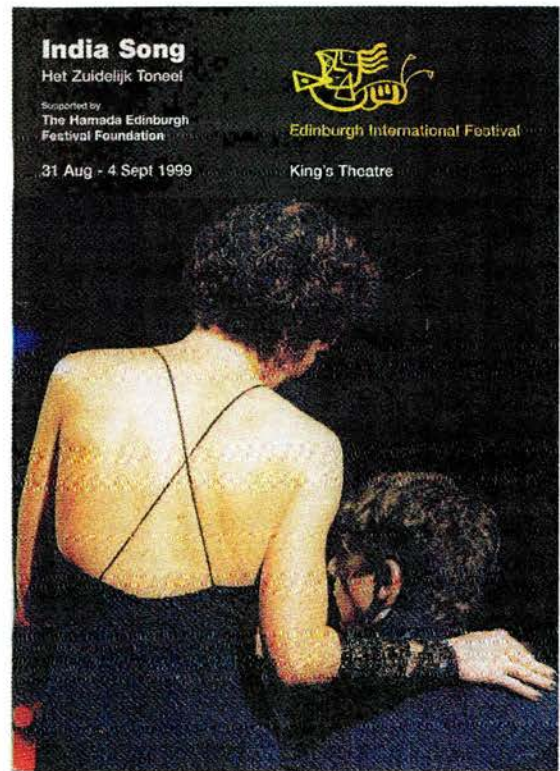
Sarah: Poor sets/actors/representations, Uncomfortable/poor set-ups, Poor audiences.

Appendix Three: Documents of *India Song*

As an adjunct to both Chapter Three on representations of live performance in non-verbal media and Chapter Four's examination of journalistic reviews, this appendix examines a range of extra-performance 'documents' of *India Song*. These provide further case studies and illustrations of different media of representation and help put the reviews in context with additional material on the production. A few practical problems hindered the collection of material: particularly, the length of time that had elapsed since the production; additionally, the company being from The Netherlands, much of the material is in Dutch. Nonetheless, by contacting Het Zuidelijk Toneel (now called Zuidelijk Toneel Hollandia) and accessing the Edinburgh International Festival archive, it was possible to collect a good range of material:

- Published text of the play used by the production (Duras 1976)
- VHS video recording
- CD of Harry de Wit's music for *India Song*, also including short extracts of speech, stage directions, and background sound effects ('Indian street sounds') (de Wit 1999)
- Still photographs
- Reviews and previews in Dutch, French, and English
(Appendix Four reproduces the English language reviews of *India Song* from the Edinburgh International Festival.)
- A Het Zuidelijk Toneel book containing articles on their major productions, including *India Song* (HZT kindly provided translations of some of these articles)
- An accompanying Het Zuidelijk Toneel CD-ROM
- The programme from Edinburgh International Festival
- Other Edinburgh International Festival promotional material

From enquiries made to Het Zuidelijk Toneel, it seems that there is no existing prompt or notation copy of the production – or at least none that they are willing to make available. (It appears that the text was not specifically translated or substantially adapted for the production.) Nor was the company prepared to make any explicit statement about their documentary policies. However, from the material available it is clear that they are fairly active in recording and promoting past performances. This appendix examines just some of the material collected, focusing in particular on the elements supplementary to the media examined in Chapter Three. The



Edinburgh International Festival
programme cover (IS-CVB10)

appendix therefore divides the material into three categories: photographs, video, and other documentary material (particularly the CD-ROM).

(a) Still Photographs

The *India Song* photographs collected can be divided into two categories: those taken in The Netherlands for Het Zuidelijk Toneel by Chris Van der Burght; and those taken in Edinburgh by the Festival's photographer Douglas Robertson.

The Douglas Robertson Photographs

As *India Song* had a moderately long run in Edinburgh, the Festival held a fully staged photo-call of the production. Douglas Robertson, employed directly by the

Festival, attended this along with representatives from *The Herald* and *The Scotsman* and other accredited freelance press-photographers regularly contributing to UK national papers. In theory, therefore, a very large number of photographs exist from this photo-call, including the work of a range of photographers. From the complete contact sheet of pictures taken by Robertson, the Festival's Press Office selected a range of images to be reproduced and made available to all journalists and news organisations on request. This selection was made primarily according to which photographs would make the best newspaper or magazine images, in other words which would be most likely to be used. A second and overlapping consideration would be which images would most effectively sell the production to a potential audience. Both these functions are primarily promotional, the retention of the photographs in the archive being a secondary consideration. However, the complete contact sheet of Robertson's images exists in the Edinburgh International Festival's archive and has archival value in documenting the performance (or more accurately the photo-call). This discussion, however, will only consider the photographs actively selected to represent the performance for their particular expressive content, rather than the documentary merit of the total body of images. Other practical aspects of the photographic policy of the Festival are also worth mentioning. The photographs are never touched-up, edited, or cropped in any fashion before being made available to the newspapers. The reproductions are developed commercially, so no choices on printing or colour are possible. Where possible, however, the developers use a print size corresponding to the negative dimensions, to avoid accidental editing through cropping the frame. The photographs, therefore, display what the viewfinder saw.

Four Robertson photographs were reproduced and made available to the press (see pictures IS-DR1 to IS-DR4 over). All are in colour and all display the strong lighting effects characteristic of the production, with bright orange, dark red, and blue backgrounds visible. All four pictures are of heads and torsos, relative close-ups of the performers and in this manner are conventionally composed photographs. They are 'well-made-images', which in framing are entirely consistent with televisual representation. They are examples of what Gay McAuley describes as typical of



Robertson (IS-DR1)

Anne-Marie Stretter (Chris Nietvelt)

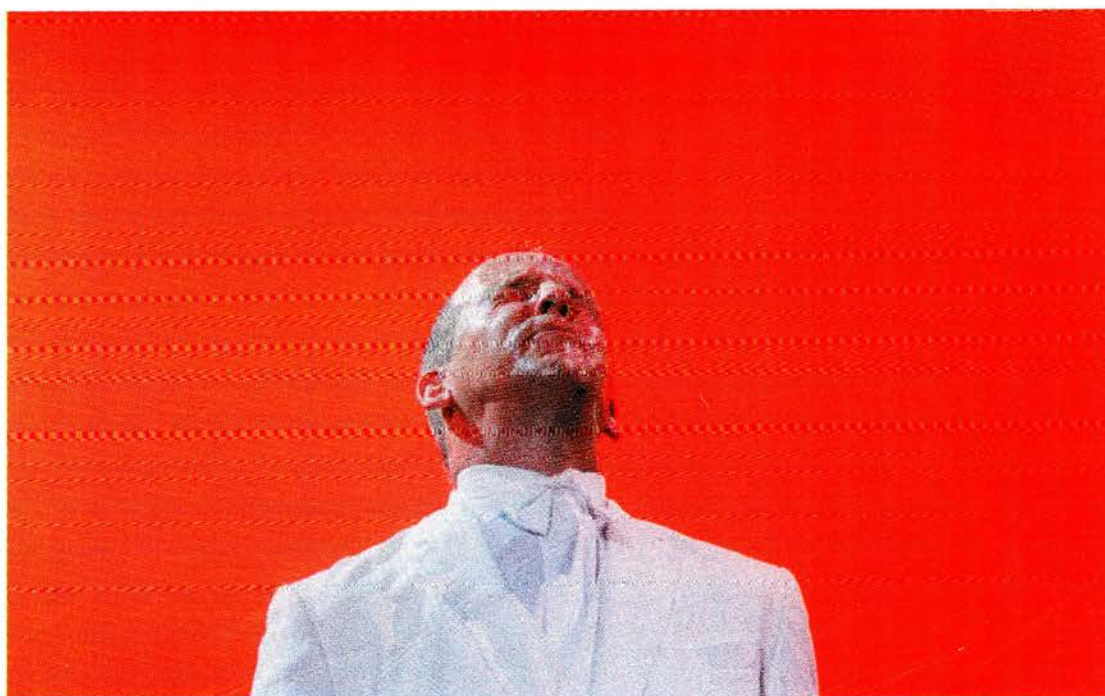


Robertson (IS-DR2)



Robertson (IS-DR3)

Anne-Marie Stretter & The young attaché (Ramsey Nasr)



Robertson (IS-DR4)

The vice-consul (Bart Slegers)

theatre photographs, which are

frequently misleading as they are focused on the actor in a purely cinematic way, and more often than not are posed so as to obtain an aesthetically pleasing picture rather than to record any intrinsically theatrical reality. (McAuley 1986:7)

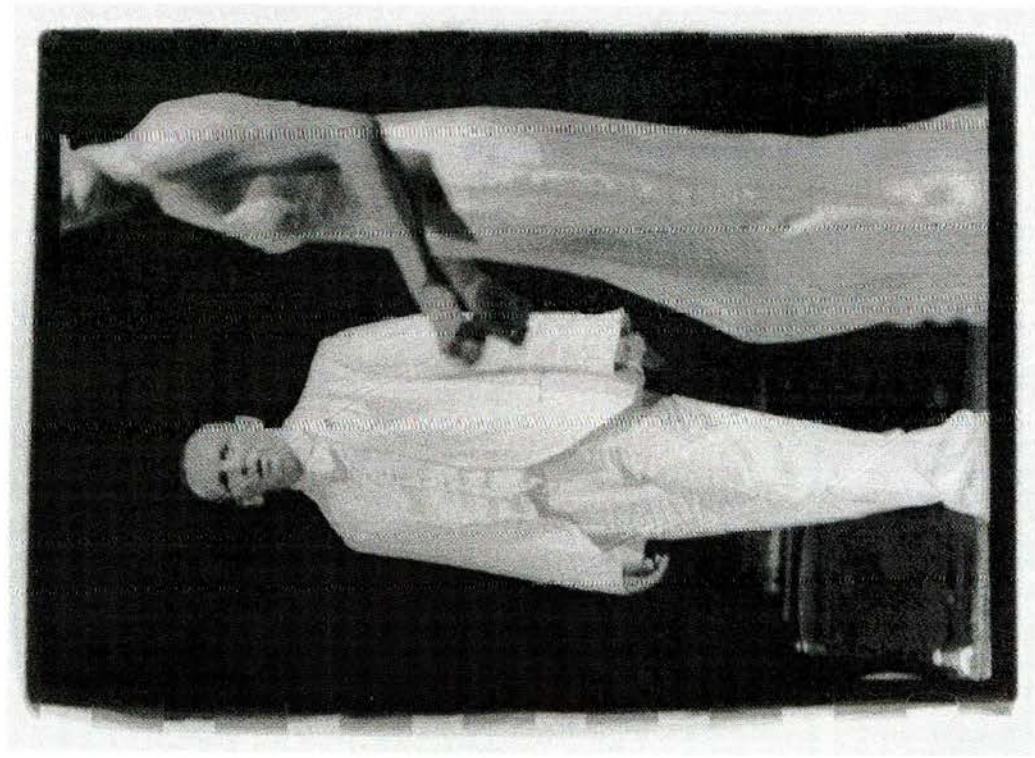
There is no attention drawn in the photographs to their status as photographs and no evidence of conscious selection in the images. They are photographs that pretend to be not there by not intruding on the viewer's impressions of the image. The images implicitly claim the authority of photographic realism: direct and objective windows onto the absent performance. Of course, this is a false claim, as these images construct an entirely new aesthetic for the performance, based upon the close-up rather than the stage picture or the wandering eye of the spectator. The images impose a selected frame on the viewer.

In terms of content, it is worth remarking on a few representational qualities of the images. The pictures do somehow communicate the heat of the production, present in the colours, the visible sweat, and the languidness of the performers. Additionally, one of the images (IS-DR4) is worth mentioning as it is a photograph of the single moment of the performance when an actor (Bart Slegers as The vice-consul) speaks live on stage. Chapter Four demonstrated how reviewers tended to focus on this moment and I suggested that it could form the focal point of representations of the performance, particularly in terms of its existence in time and space. Hence, there is the potential for this photograph to act as what Cartier-Bresson describes as a 'decisive' moment, a single image representing the missing whole. However, this picture singularly fails to achieve this; it is a static image hinting at nothing beyond itself and it is only possible to read anything into it through exterior knowledge of the rest of the production.

The Chris Van der Burght Photographs

The photographs by Chris Van der Burght are of a different order entirely and are of far more interest, displaying greater awareness of the problems of photographing theatre. Although I know less about the circumstances of these photographs' execution, it is clear that there were taken on stage and not in a studio. Indeed, the backgrounds of some of the images also suggest that they were taken in the presence of an audience, although it is difficult to image how this happened without the photographer intruding on the audience's experience of the performance. I have obtained twelve Van der Burght images, those selected by HZT; again, many more may exist on archived contact sheets.

The Van der Burght pictures are in both colour and black and white, the negative black border surrounding many of them demonstrating that they are uncropped. Inclusion of this border is perhaps intended (as with Lois Greenfield's work) to assert the 'authenticity' of the photographs. In this context, however, the frames also act to immediately demonstrate the conscious choice behind their composition and emphasise the photographic medium. In particular, several are oddly framed by conventional standards – with, for example, heads cut off by the frame (IS-CVB1 over) – creating images which are striking, unusual, and that disobey standard rules of composition. Another image (IS-CVB2 over) centres the viewer's focus on two performers' joined hands, as one leads the other across the stage, which is visible out of focus in the background. Here the photograph makes its status as a photograph clear: the negative border around the image frames the picture as a picture, this is no transparent medium but one made deliberately opaque. The composition of the photograph – the performers brutally severed by the frame as they appear and disappear at the edges of the image – reinforces this, as the viewer cannot fail to notice the act of selection. The viewer is consequently required to consider why this selection has been made, and begin to actively interpret the image as a representation of an absent subject rather than merely and passively seeing the photograph. Such active reading of the picture suggests several things: first, movement across the



Van der Burght (IS-CVB1)

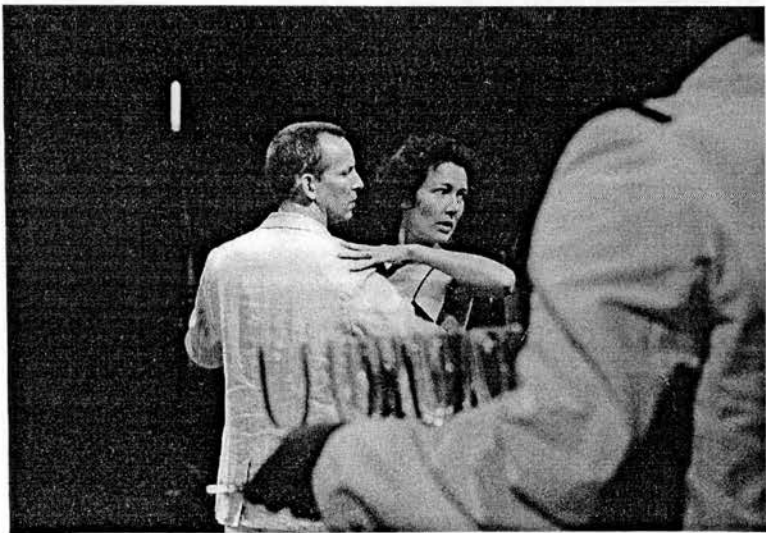


Van der Burght (IS-CVB2)

frame of the photograph enacts the movement across the stage. Additionally, the photograph is anything but televisual, by conventional standards it is ‘badly’ composed, not focusing on the actors as TV ‘talking heads’ but instead on bodies and bits of bodies, and on a clearly (if only partially) present stage. The obscured faces, the leading hands, the trailing line of the black dress, and the indistinct table between them, all construct a sense of insubstantialness that replicates the style of acting. In focusing only on bits of bodies, this image also emphasises that it does not record everything; the gaps and omission in the image render the medium evident, ensuring remembrance of the theatrical event.

Continuing such effects one photograph (IS-CVB3 below) shows a tray of glasses emerging into the frame, another (IS-CVB4 over) a long shot with performers in fore- and background disappearing to the top, bottom, left, and right of the image. With these pictures, it is as if the camera was only accidentally present, its eye seemingly wandering and arbitrary much like the audience’s gaze. Van der Burght poses other images more conventionally, although almost exclusively avoiding the head and torso shot, with the exceptions still breaking the rules by focusing on performers’ backs (IS-CVB6 & 10).

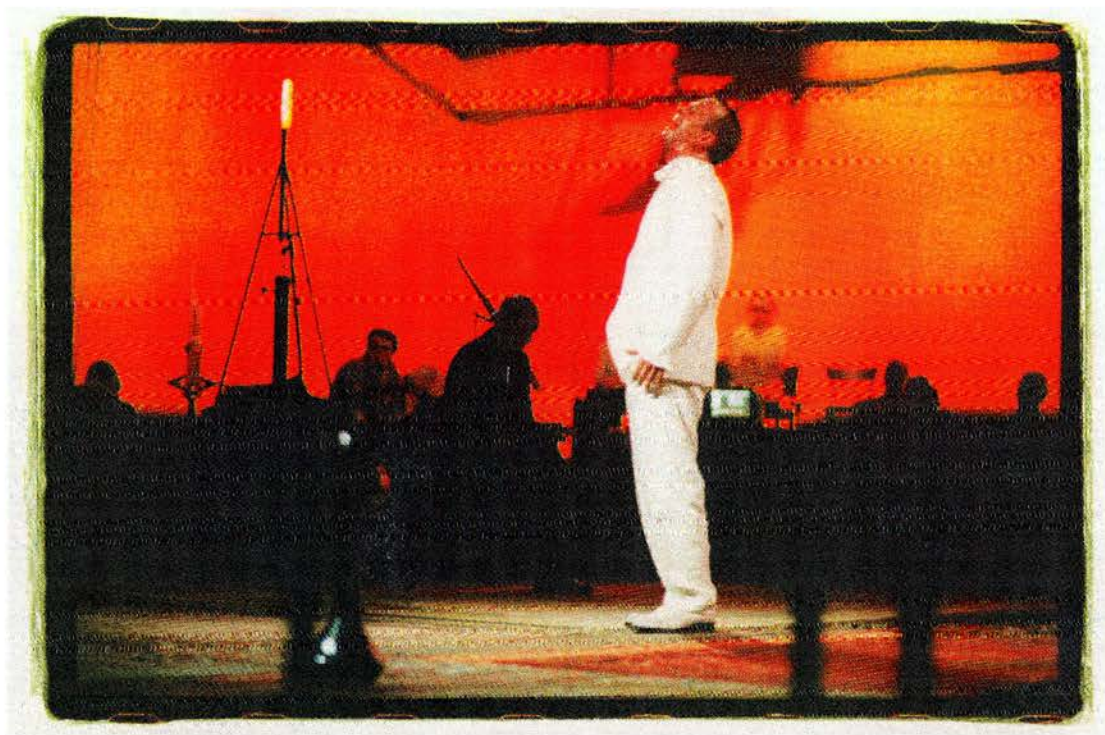
Van der Burght
(IS-CVB3)



Van der Burght
(IS-CVB4)



Like Robertson, Van der Burght has captured the single moment in *India Song* when a performer speaks live on stage (IS-CVB5 over). This time, however, the word ‘captured’ is entirely appropriate, rather than simply the moment being pictured. In this image, The vice-consul is visible, full height, head back, drenched in sweat, mouth open and screaming out. The image focuses on the performer: a representation of how the audience to the live performance focused entirely on this moment and how the moment itself became the focus for the entire production. However, just as the theatre audience focused on the single performer yet was also aware of everything else going on around them (and just as the moment itself also bled out to effect the rest of the performance), so does this image remind us of its context. The foreground features blurred, indistinct objects, unimportant compared to the bright white actor yet present. Moreover, in the background are silhouetted musicians, a prompt or lighting screen, and further back still – and oddly more distinct – two audience members. These two figures are isolated from each other, divided by the vertical of the performer’s body, just as the performer himself is isolated in his moment of agony. The audience members also appear transfixed, the man on the left in particular directing the spectator of the photograph to acknowledge of audience experience of the live performance.



Van der Burght (IS-CVB5)

The vice-consul (Bart Slegers)

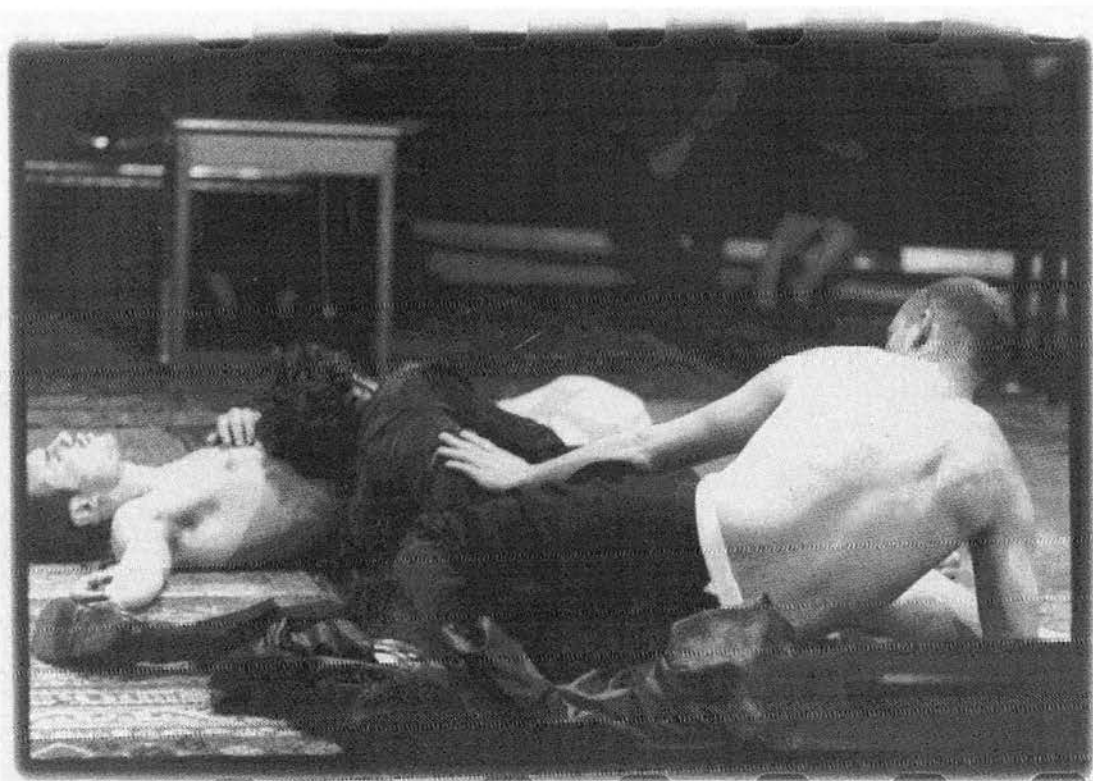
Chris Van der Burght's photographs successfully manage to be truly theatrical images, in part by continually reminding their viewers that they are not complete. In a sense, they achieve what Chapter Three advocates as a possible approach of all representations, particularly those that can appear to claim mechanical neutrality (still photography, video) or other form of authority (archive, notation). The images force the viewer to fill in the gaps and therefore to visualise the original performance. Van der Burght's images refuse to contain all their reference and relevance within the frame itself, forcing the viewer to think out beyond the image, to read narrative and context and time and movement into the image. They successfully achieve Greenfield's objective of a narrative beyond the $1/500^{\text{th}}$ of a second. Additionally, these are photographs that, as French theatre photographer Claude Bricage demands, dare to stage themselves (Villeneuve 1990:30). They are photographs that are themselves theatrical, stagy, and dynamic.



Van der Burght (IS-CVB6)



Van der Burght (IS-CVB7)



Van der Burght (IS-CVB8)



Van der Burght (IS-CVB9)

(b) Video Recording

Het Zuidelijk Toneel's video of *India Song* fits neatly into the debate surrounding the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of video recording discussed in Chapter Three. The video is filmed by a single camera, in a fixed position, recording the entire stage in wide-angle during the course of an actual performance and in the presence of the audience. No intervention to aid the recording is made, no lighting changes, no editing or framing. The video shot is selected to be wide enough to take in the entire stage, including the revolving fan, the musicians, and a substantial section of the audience. The recording starts with the audience taking their seats and ends with the applause and bows of the performers. It shows the surface appearance of the performance, being what you would get if you pointed a camera at the stage and pressed 'record'.

The experience of watching the performance on video, on a small screen television-set, instantly reminds the viewer of the contrasting codes and conventions of live and televisual media. The production begins, for example, in complete darkness before eventually music, the *India Song* refrain, and finally the recorded voices begin. The stage directions (read aloud in the performance) also note this long, slow beginning: 'Black. A tune from between the two wars, 'India Song', is played slowly on the piano, it is played right through to cover the time, always long, that it takes the audience to emerge from the ordinary world they are in when the performance begins' (Duras 1976:11 and de Wit 1999:track 12). Such a description could match the opening of a television drama, except here the screen stays dark for what seems like a very long time (television audience do not 'emerge' from their ordinary world, but rather remain within it). Even after the voices themselves begin, the stage remains dark and empty, with this state held for far longer than would be the case in a made-for-television recording. During the live performance, the length of darkness would be unremarkable, the audience being within the sphere of darkness themselves (rather than excluded from it by the screen) and drawn into a heightened level of attention and expectation. On screen, in contrast, this opening is awkward

and probably feels far longer than it actually is, marking out differences in reception modes and experiences between the two media.

This example raises the question, particularly relevant to *India Song*, as to the extent to which stage effects can work on the television screen. The production concept of *India Song* involves the separation of the actors from narrating, off-stage voices; but as a recorded medium inherently separates voices and appearance from the presence of the actor, this effect is redundant. This is also the case with the pivotal moment in the production when an actor finally speaks live on stage. Here the choice of fixed camera and the explicitly ‘documentation’ style of recording has an advantage over more interventionist and televisual techniques. While the recording might be more readable if it is fully edited or utilises multiple cameras, intrinsically theatrical effects will still not be effective on screen. The single camera method emphasises to the viewer that this is not meant to be seen on TV and therefore should not be judged according to televisual standards. It is as if a large warning label – ‘document’ – is slapped across the entire recording.

Instead, the recording can be used as an aid to memory, to extract detail from the performance, as a teaching tool, or for other facilitating purposes. Alongside other documents, never self-supporting or self-contained, the video documentation is certainly a useful tool. The *India Song* recording, for example, reminded me again of the characteristic pose assumed by Anne-Marie Stretter (Chris Nietvelt): skinny, gaunt, standing lost looking with her hands held in front of her body, elbows bent at her sides. Careful selection of still photographs, however, could also communicate this kind of detail: image IS-DR3 captures this distinct pose. Indeed, it is interesting to match up the moments selected by the photographers with moments in the production. While the video clearly cannot and does not record everything, the more evident acts of selection behind the still photographs mark them as offering a distinct interpretation of the performance. The moments selected are emphasised by the isolating and profiling effect of the photographic frame; this represents the characteristic power of the still photographic image and is worth exploring further.

When attending live performances, I have often observed an interesting phenomenon whereby, if already familiar with images of the performance from still photographs, tiny fragmentary moments of the piece strike me with a powerful sense of the familiar. I have, yet I have not, seen it before. The moments frozen so authoritatively by the camera do not exist in the performance in their own right, only as a part of a changing whole. This is particularly noticeable with dance, where the moments captured are so fleeting in performance that they are almost impossible to see, and indeed could not be seen in isolation at all. In fact, they are moments that I would not have seen if not prompted to do so by the photograph. In *On Photography*, Susan Sontag suggests that,

Photographs may be more memorable than moving images, because they are a neat slice of time, not a flow. Television is a stream of underselected images, each of which cancels its predecessor. Each still photograph is a privileged moment, turning into a slim object that one can keep and look at again. (Sontag 1979:18)

With *India Song* the relationship between the photographs and video is exactly such, the photographs isolating moments that when subsequently seen in the video hold particular significance because of their photographic existence. (Additionally, it is clear that the selected image of the photograph contrasts with the ‘underselected’ images of the live performance itself.) The presentational power of the still photograph forces the interpretation made by the photographer’s act of selection upon the memory of the performance and the experience of the video.

Clearly, where the video recording comes into its own over still photographs is in the communication of performance time. Here, however, the conflicting live and recorded media again intervene. While I would describe the pace of the live performance of *India Song* as languid, attempting to capture the mood of colonial India, the video performance is in contrast simply slow. I would suggest this difference is the result of qualities of liveness: the experience of the live performance being one of heightened expectation and concentration, with awareness of unique and unrepeatable time being particularly relevant here, in contrast to the dissipated

attention to the recorded video performance. Other differences between the live experience and the mediated experience are also emphasised by the *India Song* video, particularly the fixed viewpoint of the camera in contrast to the wandering eye of the spectator.

Ultimately the main response inspired by the video recording of *India Song* is an awareness of general and particular technical insufficiencies. The video image is very indistinct, already recorded in wide-angle the grainy image means that faces are very blurred, containing no detail or expression. A screen-pixelated blur, for example, obscures scenes of nudity, as if the recording is enacting its own form of technological censorship. You would get more information from the back row of the auditorium. The sound recording is also poor, with elements such as the changing direction of the voices as the speakers revolve on the end of the fan being totally lost. Hypothetically, many of these elements are technical limitations that are accidental (in that with better technology they could be overcome) rather than intrinsic to video technology. For example, the higher resolution of digital recording might compensate for lack of detail; the employment of multiple microphones would provide a greater sense of sound located in three-dimensional space. Technical developments, however, are less likely to be able to resolve elements resulting from characteristics more fundamental to the medium: including foreshortening and distorting, the imposition of the screen frame on the viewer, perceptions of pre-recording and playback, elimination of risk, and the loss of kinetic dynamism. More debateable is whether it is possible for physical presence to be completely communicated via the screen image. Additionally, the imposition of codes of video literacy onto viewers of the recorded live performance (discussed in Chapter Three) is likely to be enhanced as a result of improved technology; the more perfect the video image becomes the less 'transparent' is its presentation of the live performance.

While the technical inadequacies of the *India Song* video are largely detrimental, there are occasions when they add accidental televisual special effects of their own. The vice-consul's white suit, for example, captures the camera's attention and

confuses its attempts to establish contrast. The result is that the actor is bleached-out by the lights, creating a blurred semi-halo effect around the performer that is oddly appropriate. Later, when The vice-consul is alone and speaking aloud on stage for the only time, the camera attempts to capture the stage lighting changes, creating an intriguing screen image where bands of red and black and blue are interrupted by the white-clothed, solitary figure of the performer, with the only movement the slowly revolving fan. Here is a screen image that, like the stage image although for different reasons, is truly effective. Intriguingly, this is the accidental result of effects (blurring, heavy contrast, pixillation) which although televisual are not in the conventional repertoire of television effects. Although accidental in this case, it would be possible to compare such effects with the deliberately interventionist and distorting techniques employed in Chris Nash's still photography.

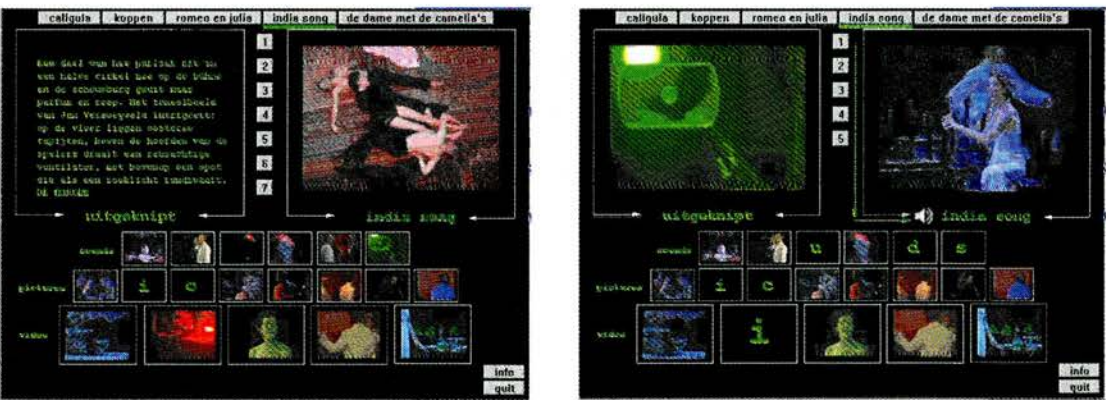
(c) Other Documentary Material

Het Zuidelijk Toneel 1990–2000 is a book produced by HZT about Ivo van Hove's work with the company, designed to serve both documentary and promotional purposes (Dieleman, Engen and Eynde 2001). This book, published in Dutch, includes articles by Ivo van Hove as well as by journalists, actors, set designers, and other people working for the company. It includes a small number of photographs of different van Hove productions, and articles analysing the performances. Many of the articles would not be out of place in theatre journals or newspapers; indeed, some of the articles have been previously published in such sources. The book is unfortunately very user-unfriendly, printed silver-on-black, occasionally black-on-silver, in a bewildering variety of fonts with no clear contents page or layout. It is unclear whether the format is attempting to make some kind of artistic statement (mimicking the company's style in some manner) or is simply designer indulgence.

Much more interesting as an attempt to represent the work of the company is the accompanying CD-ROM, slotted into a pocket at the back of the book. Computer technology – the affordable production of well-made CD-ROMs in particular – offers

very interesting opportunities to those documenting live performance. Allegra Fuller Snyder, for example, stresses the opportunities CD-ROM and the internet offer dance in their integration of ‘time/space documentation’ (C. Johnson and Snyder 1999:12). This area has so far been little utilised, but will surely become increasingly common, especially on company websites.

The ability CD-ROM offers to combine in one source a whole range of documentations, to provide easy reference and movement between different recording media, and to back up information in different forms, means that the questions posed by the attributes of different media of documentation are less of an issue. The inclusion of video can compensate for still photography’s static qualities; the selection of still photographs presenting an interpretation and guide to ‘underselected’ video. Sound can accompany description; illustrations of detail can match indistinct recording. Interviews, articles, video, photography, notation, scripts, and so on can all be located in one source. Het Zuidelijk Toneel’s CD is an interesting advance in this direction, although, of course, with all the opportunities such technology offers the primary problem of the absent live event remains unchanged.



Screenshots from CD-ROM

Like the book, the CD-ROM includes documents of several Het Zuidelijk Toneel productions, all directed by Ivo van Hove. For each production, the CD presents sound-recordings (accessed through clicking on particular still photographs), video-clips, and photographs accompanied by extracted newspaper reviews of the

production – the text, however, is fairly minimal. The CD collects the still photographs together in eight groups, each containing several images in sequence. Clicking through the photographs provides a series of images, Muybridge-esque sequences communicating the impression of movement but with each image also claiming the privilege of selection that Sontag describes the still photograph holding over moving film. Like Chris Van der Burght's other photographs, these images are not necessarily 'well-composed', in focus, or carefully framed. Many are indistinct (often through distorting colour or heavy darkness), showing only parts of objects or segments of the set. In series 'e', for example, the sequence flows around a dancing couple, faint, out-of-focus, in the centre of the frame; in series 'p' the performers move almost completely out of the frame.

Forming an interesting contrast with the straight, single camera, documentation approach of the VHS video recording of *India Song*, the video-clips on the CD-ROM are of high-resolution and presented in an edited, polished, and constructed manner. On the CD-ROM the video is edited together from several mobile cameras, also using effects such as zoom, over-layered images, and cross-fade. One example ('d') incorporates three level of recording in the same frame, as actors pictured in different degrees of focus and intensity move over each other. However, while constructed from edited clips into a very slick and impressive package at no point does this video presentation moves towards asserting itself as a distinct dramatic performance in its own right. The layout of the disk, in particular the interface, stresses to the user at all times that it is a documentation. Additionally, the recordings are short, evidently edited and constructed rather than neutral or seamless, appearing as snippets or tasters of the original performance. However, while the still photographs represent a definite discourse on *India Song*, presenting an interpretation and assessment of the production, this disk can only be a spur to discussion. In itself, it 'says' very little. Although not presenting a complete performance of *India Song*, the CD-ROM video does suggest that more interventionist approaches, re-performing the production for the camera, need not result in the original work vanishing behind a re-packaged media entity.

India Song

Production Details

Anne-Marie Stretter	Chris Nietvelt
Michael Richardson	Steven van Watermeulen
The young attaché	Ramsey Nasr
The Stretters' guest	Jorre Vandenbussche
The vice-consul	Bart Slegers
Servant	Stefan Ramautar

Voices

Meral Taygun, Jackie Carver, Deborah Abrahams,
Roderick Leigh, Adriane Brine

Director	Ivo van Hove
Composer/Musician	Harry de Wit
Set Designer	Jan Versweyveld
Costume Designer	Dries Van Noten
Dramaturgy	Bart Van den Eynde

First performed 10 June 1999, Stadsschouwburg, Amsterdam

Performed at the Edinburgh International Festival

31 August – 1 September 1999

The Daily Telegraph

Thursday, September 2, 1999

Silence is not golden

SEVERAL phrases come to mind when contemplating this year's Edinburgh Festival drama programme, drearily pretentious and barking mad being prominent among them.

Audiences have responded by staying away in droves, and the critics have been distinctly down in the mouth, so I guess a painful *post mortem* will follow. Might I suggest that the odd comedy would not go amiss and that some late-night cabaret along the lines of the Fringe's stunning Jacques Brel show, *Anonymous Society*, would also be welcome?

More fundamentally, I feel that the Festival would do well to disengage itself from one of its four conventionally tiered and proscenium-arched venues, and find an open performing space, such as London's Roundhouse or Glasgow's Tramway, that can flexibly accommodate avant-garde shows and win back the younger audience from the Traverse and the Assembly Rooms. As it stands, there is too much mismatching of theatre, play and age group.

Such grim reflections are prompted by the shoe-horning of this Dutch production of Marguerite Duras's *India Song* into a clumsily adapted (and half-empty) King's Theatre. Duras's play was originally commissioned for the opening of the new National Theatre building in 1974. In the event, it was never performed in London, but in 1975 it was made into a film, directed by the author and starring Delphine Seyrig. Only in 1993 did it receive its stage premiere.

Edinburgh

India Song
KING'S THEATRE

Why it continues to be of interest to anyone beats me. The tenuous story deals with the thwarted passion between a French ambassador's wife, a vice-consul and a jealous third party, played out in pre-war colonial high society.

On the page, it might look profound; in the theatre, it seemed self-absorbed and self-indulgent, coloured by some purple prose rendered into rather plodding English by Barbara Bray.

Its novelty is that the actors on stage, barring two climactic moments, do not speak: they only mime the action as the tale is chorically related by unseen narrative voices. The device is not particularly fruitful: it becomes confusing, and it led the actors here to some ludicrous silent-movie excesses.

Had Ivo van Hove's production been exquisitely evocative, the evening might have cast a fragrant spell, but I couldn't see anything special about it at all.

The lighting and design were unimaginative, the staging failed to conjure an atmosphere of torrid monsoon dampness, and the supposedly oriental smells wafting into the auditorium reminded me of nothing more exotic than Johnson's floor polish. At least the tedium lasted only 70 minutes, even if it seemed much longer.

Festival tickets: 0131 473 2000

Rupert Christiansen

THE TIMES

Thursday, September 2, 1999

THEATRE

India Song

King's

Nell Cooper

THE story of *India Song* is a simple one. In 1930s colonial India, a woman, Anne-Marie Stretter, is the sensuous pivot for the bored male diplomatic community. When a glance between Anne-Marie and the Vice-Consul of Lahore is exchanged, their lives are changed forever.

Meanwhile, beyond the sumptuousness of the ambassador's reception is a world of poverty and decay that Anne-Marie and the Vice-Consul will never touch. There is a passion of unconsummated desires that sees the Vice-Consul driving himself into an obsessive frenzy as Anne-Marie moves passively around the men, who seem to be the only thing giving her life meaning.

We see all this at close quarters, as a series of amplified voices remember the affair, commenting, romanticising, mythologising, as the *India Song* of the title haunts the scene, giving it an ethereal essence.

The director, Ivo Van Hove, has taken this a stage further by having another voice read Duras's stage directions, and has gone against the grain of reverence with which her work is often

Edinburgh 99



treated by avoiding self-consciously languid pauses and allowing an urgent sense of drive to pour through. This gives the play a desperate edge so raw as to be almost able to feel the sticky heat of the moment. Composer Harry de Wit's presence on Jan Versweyveld's set playing his score live gives the production the air of a precise avant-garde concert, and one is gripped by the actors' unstudied concentration.

Chris Nietvelt's waif-like Anne-Marie is a performance of real live flesh and blood. Likewise Steven van Watermeulen's louche, chain-smoking Michael Richardson — Anne-Marie's husband — is a figure of buttoned-up restraint who only comes alive through Anne-Marie.

Van Hove proved last year that he was more than just an interpreter of undiscovered classics, but without doing texts a disservice gives them a renewed sense of context that makes them important for our own times.



The HERALD

Wednesday, September 1, 1999

Theatre

India Song, King's Theatre
Mark Fisher

THIS astonishing piece of theatre is not just without precedent, it's as if the director, Ivo van Hove, has reinvented the wheel. It hits me in places no production has hit me before.

The starting point is pretty unusual. Marguerite Duras's *India Song* is a vision of colonial Lahore that concerns the unattainable Anne-Marie Stretter and her gentleman admirers whose passions, beneath the stench, the heat, and the weight of convention, drive them to the point of insanity. In the script, no word is spoken in view of the audience, the action being described by offstage voices, a technique designed to emphasise the onstage torpor.

But in his production for Eindhoven's Het Zuidelijk Toneel, Van Hove has come up with an interpretation that is as radical as Duras's. The unseen voices are recorded on tape, but so, too, are the stage directions, edited into a fast-flowing barrage of detail which is sometimes echoed, sometimes contradicted in the movement onstage. That stage, shared by the audience, sits beneath a revolving metal arm broadcasting an additional soundtrack of unsettling sound and speech to complement Harry de Wit's tremendous live score. All the while, washes of citronella engulf the audience, completing a sensory bombardment that sets the nerve-ends aflame.

Never can the sight of six silent actors drifting across an open stage have been so riveting. When, finally, one character does shout out a dozen short lines, the effect is electrifying. It's a transfixing production that warps your sense of time and place, making the applause seem like a vulgar intrusion.

THE STAGE

September 9, 1999

Edinburgh International
Festival:
King's

India Song

Disorientation and amazement go hand in hand during Ivo van Hove's brilliant production of Marguerite Duras' *India Song*.

A section of the audience is on the stage, pervasive sepia light turns companions into old photographs before your eyes, and there's a strong scent of citrus and flowers in the air.

As the tale of the beautiful Anne-Marie Stretter (Chris Nietvelt) and the fatal attraction she holds

for the Vice-Consul (Bart Siegers) in colonial India begins to unfold, all senses and preconceptions are challenged.

The centrepiece of Jan Versweyveld's set is a huge rotating fan with speakers at either end, which carries the sound of rain, voices and memories around the theatre. This disconcerting effect is backed by the wonderful music of Harry de Witt.

Van Hove's handling of the text is unforgettable. The story is narrated by off-stage voices, which relate dialogue, action and even stage direction. Throughout, the characters mouth to the half-remembered dialogue, seemingly helpless to escape from their destinies.

So it is startling when the play's one moment of open, agonising emotion is uttered by Siegers in his own, full-throated, raw voice. This cuts through the studied ennui of the characters' world, and has the same visceral impact as the stylised monsoon that dominates the stage in a flash of light and sound.

This is a work of total theatricality and grand style, presented with bravery and commitment to excellence.

Allison Freebairn

EDINBURGH DRAMA

Duras's play dissected to dreadful effect

It has been years since Brian McMaster has given the Festival any good spoken theatre. On one hand, he offers minor plays and minor playwrights; on the other, he offers high-profile examples of Director's Theatre, in which once-living plays are joggled about to flashy effect. Either way, his intention seems to be to provide an alternative to the norms of London theatre; either way, he has repeatedly misfired. It is very hard to believe that this is the same Brian McMaster whose musical concerts show an ardent belief in the western canon of classical music as a vital source of truth and beauty.

Last year, McMaster gave Edinburgh two different productions - of O'Neill's *More Stately Mansions* and Camus's *Caligula* - by the latest Euro-craze, the Belgian-born Ivo van Hove. Both were pretentious anatomy lessons: the plays themselves were corpses laid out cold upon van Hove's dissection slab. This year, van Hove has brought more of the same treatment, this time applied to Marguerite Duras's *India Song*. The staging - a co-production

with the Holland Festival, was new in Amsterdam in June, and it is so dull and anti-theatrical that it is difficult to keep one's mind on it in the theatre, let alone recall it afterwards.

India Song was commissioned in 1973, filmed in



1975, but first performed only in 1983. It is more or less a non-play, in which the actions represented on stage are recollected, elegiacally and ironically, by a quartet of voices off, and are surrounded by remembered music. Three men are shown to be variously involved with the heroine. The setting is India, and ambassadorial.

The play is an oblique work whose textures need to be given their full dimensions for their poetry to succeed. "The audience must not think, but is forced to undergo", writes van Hove in a lengthy programme note. "*India Song* should



Corpse on a slab: Ivo van Hove's pretentious treatment of *'India Song'* does the play no favours at all

but torpor: it can hardly begin to experience Duras's already ironic play, let alone feel life through it, because van Hove obscures it with his own multiple layers of irony. Instead of India, he gives us technology. A huge English translation of a French play set in India, the fan revolves slowly above

actors speak with Dutch accents. Their disembodied voices, artificially amplified and re-directed, drone flatly, as if Duras's words bored the hell out of them. The threads of Duras's narrative become wholly obscure. Which man is which? Who is this hero-

ine, Anne-Marie Stretter. You can tell from his programming that McMaster places less faith in playwrights than in directors; and he has turned the Edinburgh Festival into Britain's chief haven for Director's

Theatre. Thus he has committed Edinburgh Festival audiences to a theatrical diet of cleverness and decadence. The directors are kept busy; the plays are kept dead.

Alastair Macaulay

Robbie Jack



THE SCOTSMAN

Wednesday, September 1, 1999

India Song

King's Theatre

Joyce McMillan

A PIECE of advice: don't go anywhere near Ivo van Hove's gorgeous, tantalising, fascinating production of Marguerite Duras's *India Song*, brought to the Festival by the Zuidelijk Toneel of Eindhoven, unless you're prepared, for a brief 75 minutes, to let things go. Don't go armed with any assumptions – about Duras, about the play, about the nature of theatre, or about your role as a member of the audience. Instead, go prepared to loll – literally, if you have a seat on the stage – on large black silk cushions, drenched in hot light and sudden inky darkness, bathed in unexpected and intense sounds and smells, experiencing something unsettling and strange; for this is a show that deconstructs, and deconstructs, and deconstructs again, although always in the purposeful, deeply intelligent and finally elegant way that is Ivo van Hove's hallmark.

In the first place, this show deconstructs the whole look of the auditorium at the King's. Duras's play is a strange, elegiac story of doomed love and obsession between the French ambassador's wife – the beautiful Anne-Marie Stretter – and a vice-consul from Lahore, set among the embassies and residences of Calcutta in the dying years of empire. Duras's text is conceived as a story told by the unseen, amplified voices of four observers recalling the tragedy years later, while the action unfolds wordlessly in front of the audience; and Van Hove's production makes the whole audience, drawn into the circle of thick yellow light and sound, part of that culture of decadent voyeurism and gossip. But it also deconstructs the text by setting up its own edgy dialogue with it, reading Duras's sharp stage directions into the narrative, yet constantly challenging and contradicting them slightly, as if commenting on the slipperiness of memory. And Van Hove follows Duras in deconstructing the role of the actor, separating sound and dialogue from action and gesture; yet at the height of the story, he lets the drama break free, as the vice-consul roars out his huge, frustrated longing in his own voice.

But always, Van Hove shares the central preoccupation of Duras's text, which has to do with the confrontation between a Western culture based on "masculine" ideas about action, control, order, and an Indian culture based on passivity, fatalism, acceptance of human life as part of a huge organic cycle of decay and rebirth. This is perhaps where Van Hove's production is weakest: the show literally gives itself no time to conjure a sense of the lassitude, the boredom, the heavy, aimless sensuality of Anne-Marie Stretter's life. But if this *India Song* does not challenge Western ideas of pace, it surely challenges our obsession with understanding and control. It bombards our senses, questions our ideas about memory and narrative, and finally shakes our sense of the stability of our own civilisation and world-view like a minor theatrical earthquake: not reassuring, but strong, beautiful and bold, and impossible to forget.

24 WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1999

Sounds, smells and style . . . but little substance

THEATRE

India Song
King's Theatre★★

IN theory, Ivo van Hove's production of Marguerite Duras' story of doom-laden passion sounded like Gandhi meets *The English Patient*.

The moment the eyes of the Vice-Consul and the French Ambassador's wife's met should have been electric. Yet the most sensual spark of the evening came from van Hove's rubbing and rapping of an Indian clay



POOR: A poignant moment

percussive pot. Van Hove's live music and sound effects on stage reflected his mould-breaking experimentation.

These included neon street lighting throughout the theatre's interior; an egg-shaped rug-strewn stage that thrust both into the auditorium and backstage in which sat a further 50 of the audience; a massive ceiling-fan carrying lights and speakers.

Van Hove's piano-playing was a joy, ranging from the haunting *India Song*

itself to additional blues, jazz and incidental music. The entire play's soundtrack and actors' lines were pre-recorded.

In contrast, when our frustrated Vice-Consul screams out his desire and despair "live" on stage, the air is momentarily electrified for all too brief a moment.

Although fascinating, on balance this is a sad case of style over substance. The audience needed to be quick-witted to keep up with the fragmented narrative, huge chunks of which were broadcast through the speakers like a radio play for theatre on speed.

An aroma-stimulating technique sounded promising, but instead of street smells, spice or the scent of monsoon, the overwhelming aroma was of lavatory cleaner. The distracting array of tricks didn't make up for the characters' many shortcomings.

In addition, although the play captured the languid luxurious monotony of embassy life against a backdrop of suffering and starvation, parts of this English translation of the French original are clumsily prosaic.

Ultimately, by distancing the underlying passion, all van Hove did was deny it.

● Until September 4

Gabe Stewart

Saturday, September 4, 1999

Tales of passion, obsession and tragic isolation

MARGUERITE DURAS, the author of *India Song*, consistently polarises opinions. You may find the world she creates rather heat-oppressed and sensually charged, full of doomed passion and fatalistic passivity, or it may seem ludicrously attenuated and overblown, striving for mythic or emblematic effect from excessively rarefied ingredients.

To an extent, Dutch director Ivo Van Hove addresses both views in this penultimate production of the Edinburgh International Festival theatre programme, performed in English by his Het Zuidelijk Toneel Ensemble. He extends the apron at the King's while seating some of the

audience on black-cushioned sofas and bathing the action in unforgiving sodium light. All this challenges the conjuring power of Duras's language, heard both in the play's actual text, consisting of five unseen voices commenting on events on stage, and the elaborate stage directions which he also incorporates through voiceover.

Duras's descriptions of a colonial embassy in 1930s Calcutta – a setting that immediately establishes the contrast of luxury enclosed by squalor – are projected on to a largely bare stage; their ability to work on our imagination assisted only by the periodic emanation of

intended to imply their powerlessness in the face of larger, destructive forces – whether the fatal passion kindled by a single glance, or the nature of India itself.

As an exercise in bravura, theatrical technique and imagination, the production is both impressive, and intriguing. In recreating the atmosphere of Duras's world, however, it succeeds rather too well.

One of the *wunderkind* playwrights currently carrying all before them on the German theatre scene, 24-year-old Marius von Mayenburg, depicts similarly hermetic milieu in *Feuergesicht* – both in the unfathomable mind of adolescent

psychopath Kurt, and the conventional domesticity which his parents are desperate to maintain.

Directed with superb intensity and precision by Thomas Ostermeier, this production by Hamburg's Deutsches Schauspielhaus constantly shifts perspective between grubbily graphic naturalism, distilled economy, and subtle symbolism, as the facade of happy family life gives way to incest, arson and murder. The drama's central relationship, between Kurt and his precociously world-weary sister Olga, is cunningly counterpoised with that between their parents, as the latter cling to their roles as liberal,

understanding parents, an increasingly tattered guise which conceals less and less effectively both the emotional vacuum of their life together and their wilful denial of what's happening to their children.

It's Kurt and Olga's horror at this picture of what lies before them which seems to trigger their actions, along with Kurt's jealousy of Olga's sexual experiments with boyfriend, Paul. All five actors give performances of concentrated, sharply individualised complexity.

SUE WILSON

Both runs end tonight. Booking: 0131-473 2000

THEATRE

**INDIA SONG/
FEUERGESICHT (FIREFACE)**
KING'S THEATRE/ROYAL LYCEUM
EDINBURGH

smells such as manure, citronella, incense and Van Hove's use of music, both Western and Indian.

The play tells the story of a disgraced vice-consul's obsessive, impossible love for the French ambassador's wife, with the five voices presented as recalling the tragedy at some later date. The separation, for the most part, of the actors from the dialogue seems

Appendix Five:

Details of Productions and Reviews

Details of the productions and reviews from the 1999 Edinburgh International Festival discussed in Chapter Five.

Dance

appetite

Damaged Goods/Meg Stuart/Ann Hamilton

21 & 22 August 1999, Edinburgh Festival Theatre

A non-narrative production, *appetite* employed neither traditional ballet techniques, nor even conventional dance aesthetics. How the reviewers tackle such problems is of particular interest. Although Meg Stuart is the artistic director no choreographer was credited; Ann Hamilton created a large installation on which the piece was performed.

Alice Bain, *The Guardian*, 25 August 1999 (Review A1)

Mary Brennan, *The Herald*, 23 August 1999 (Review A2)

David Dougill, *The Sunday Times*, 19 August 1999 (Review A3)

Jenny Gilbert, *The Independent on Sunday*, 29 August 1999 (Review A4)

Donald Huttera, *The Times*, 23 August 1999 (Review A5)

Don Morris, *Sunday Herald*, 29 August 1999 (Review A6)

Jann Parry, *The Observer*, 29 August 1999 (Review A7)

Allen Robertson, *The Scotsman*, 23 August 1999 (Review A8)

Sleeping Beauty

Cullberg Ballet, choreography Mats Ek

31 August – 2 September 1999, The Edinburgh Playhouse

Mats Ek's version of the classical ballet reworks the music and narrative, along with new choreography. Chosen to provide an example of coverage of a full scale, narrative ballet.

Mary Brennan, *The Herald*, 1 September 1999 (Review SB1)

Ismene Brown, *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 September 1999 (Review SB2)

Debra Craine, *The Times*, 3 September 1999 (Review SB3)

Clement Crisp, *Financial Times*, 3 September 1999 (Review SB4)

Thom Dibdin, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 1 September 1999 (Review SB5)

Thom Dibdin, *The Stage*, 9 September 1999 (Review SB6)

David Dougill, *The Sunday Times*, 5 September 1999 (Review SB7)

Louise Levene, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 5 September 1999 (Review SB8)

Judith Mackrell, *The Guardian*, 2 September 1999 (Review SB9)

Jann Parry, *The Observer*, 5 September 1999 (Review SB10)

John Percival, *The Independent*, 2 September 1999 (Review SB11)

Allan Robertson, *The Scotsman*, 1 September 1999 (Review SB12)

Triple Bill

(‘She Was Black’, ‘Solo For Two’, and ‘A Sort Of’)

Cullberg Ballet, Choreography Mats Ek

27 & 28 August 1999, The Edinburgh Playhouse

A programme consisting of three short, non-narrative dances by Mats Ek.

Mary Brenan, *The Herald*, 28 August 1999 (Review TB1)

Ismene Brown, *The Daily Telegraph*, 31 August 1999 (Review TB2)

Debra Craine, *The Times*, 30 August 1999 (Review TB3)

Donald Dougill, *The Sunday Times*, 5 September 1999 (Review TB4)
Duska Radosavijevic Heaney, *The Stage*, 2 September 1999 (Review TB5)
Donald Huttera, *The Scotsman*, 28 August 1999 (Review TB6)
Judith Mackrell, *The Guardian*, 30 August 1999 (Review TB7)
Nadine Meisner, *The Independent*, 30 August 1999 (Review TB8)

Music

Ensemble Modern Orchestra

Conductor John Adams

24 August 1999, Usher Hall

Ives Symphony No 4

Gordon Sunshine of your Love (world premiere)

Adams Naïve and Sentimental Music (European premiere)

A huge new orchestra (though based upon a smaller pre-existent ensemble) making its UK debut performing twentieth-century music, including one world and one European premiere. Selected to demonstrate how reviewers handle new orchestral music.

Geoff Brown, *The Times*, 27 August 1999 (Review EMO1)
Paul Driver, *The Sunday Times*, 29 August 1999 (Review EMO2)
Stephen Johnson, *The Scotsman*, 25 August 1999 (Review EMO3)
Nick Kemberley, *The Observer*, 29 August 1999 (Review EMO4)
Raymond Monelle, *The Independent*, 26 August 1999 (Review EMO5)
Paul Murray, *Financial Times*, 30 August 1999 (Review EMO6)
Michael Tumelty, *The Herald*, 25 August 1999 (Review EMO7)

Life on a String (Ming Ruo Qin Xian)

By Qu Xiao-song

Nieuw Ensemble, director Ingrid von Wantoch Rekowski

29 & 30 August 1999, Royal Lyceum Theatre

A narrative opera, with one singer, marking a meeting point between western and Chinese musical traditions. Written by a western-trained, Chinese-born composer, performed by a Dutch company, and containing elements at once familiar and unfamiliar to European audiences.

Keith Bruce, *The Herald*, 30 August 1999 (review LS1)

Rupert Christiansen, *The Daily Telegraph*, 1 September 1999 (Review LS2)

Thom Dibdin, *The Stage*, 2 September 1999 (Review LS3)

Stephen Johnson, *The Scotsman*, 31 August 1999 (Review LS4)

Raymond Monelle, *The Independent*, 2 September 1999 (Review LS5)

Rodney Milnes, *The Times*, 1 September 1999 (Review LS6)

Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Conductor Mariss Jansons

18 August 1999, Usher Hall

Strauss Ein Heldenleben

Berlioz Symphonie Fantastique

19 August 1999, Usher Hall

Mahler Symphony No 5 in C sharp minor

A full scale orchestra performing classical music from the western canon over two concerts. Selected to demonstrate a typical classical music concert, I could have chosen virtual any other orchestral concert from the 1999 Festival programme.

Hilary Finch, *The Times*, 20 August 1999 (Review PSO1)

Philip Gates, *Sunday Herald*, 22 August 1999 (Review PSO2)

Stephen Johnson, *The Scotsman*, 19 August 1999 (Review PSO3)
Michael Kennedy, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 22 August 1999 (Review PSO4)
Gerald Lerner, *The Times*, 23 August 1999 (Review PSO5)
Raymond Monelle, *The Independent*, 20 August 1999 (Review PSO6)
Tom Service, *The Scotsman*, 20 August 1999 (Review PSO7)
Michael Tumelty, *The Herald*, 19 August 1999 (Review PSO8)
Jessica Werb, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 23 August 1999 (Review PSO8)
Michael White, *Independent on Sunday*, 22 August 1999 (Review PSO10)

Theatre

The Lower Depths

By Maxim Gorky

RO Theatre, director Alize Zandwijk

24 – 27 August 1999

Having looked at *India Song* reviews in such detail, I include only one theatre production here. A Dutch production adapted from Gorky's play, text-based, and largely naturalistic.

Robert Butler, *The Independent on Sunday*, 29 August 1999 (LD1)
Susannah Clapp, *The Observer*, 29 August 1999 (Review LD2)
Neil Cooper, *Sunday Herald*, 29 August 1999 (Review LD3)
Thom Dibdin, *Edinburgh Evening News*, 25 August 1999 (Review LD4)
Mark Fisher, *The Herald*, 25 August 1999 (Review LD5)
Stella Goomey, *The Stage*, 2 September 1999 (Review LD6)
Jeremy Kingston, *The Scotsman*, 26 August 1999 (Review LD7)
Alastair Macaulay, *Financial Times*, 26 August 1999 (Review LD8)
Joyce McMillan, *The Scotsman*, 25 August 1999 (Review LD9)
Madeleine North, *The Guardian*, 26 August 1999 (Review LD10)
John Peter, *The Sunday Times*, 29 August 1999 (Review LD11)

Appendix Six: Writing Reviews

As I suggested at the end of Chapter Four, a programme of abstract proposals for the representation of liveness in the journalistic review needs to be accompanied by recognition of the practical constraints and conflicting functions of the form. Hence, points of theory need demonstrating within the context of practice and this appendix presents a number of sample 'reviews' that attempt to demonstrate the possibilities for an 'embodied', 'spatial', and 'processual' written representation of the experience of live performance. These illustrations are not intended as examples of the most perfect reviews ever written; instead they are meant as explicit demonstrations of the proposals I have set out in the body of the thesis. Importantly, the following examples also conform to the practical restrictions of the review, the most significant of which is in terms of length but which also concern content. The following 'reviews' are between 400 and 700 words long, fitting within the standard word length of reviews in broadsheet newspapers today, any shorter and I believe that it would become almost impossible to adequately represent the performance and communicate the other factual information required. The reviews are presented in columns to physically mark their different, demonstrational intent and are placed in chronological order by date of performance.

Olga
Traverse Theatre Company

Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh
2 December 2001

At the emotional mid-point of Laura Ruohonen's *Olga* is a pivotal scene, which perhaps determines the audience's response to the production as a whole. Rundis, a bleach-blond mohican topping off Paul Thomas Hickey's clenched-necked portrayal of marginalised youth, presents Olga with a box of chocolate cherries: for your beautiful red mouth, he says. It isn't necessary to spell out the symbolism, except to note that Rundis' sweetheart is an 85-year-old woman with grey hair, shaking limbs and a bureau stuffed full of junk mail – the only post she has received in years. Here, in writing, age needs spelling out; in performance it is abundantly, physically, and so obviously present.

Eileen McCallum's Olga is a bundle of neurotic clichés: rheumatism in her fingers, a stooped back, hesitant walk and unresponsive limbs. She falls prey to a dubious antique dealer and cuts the ends off her shoes to make her toes more comfortable. Of course, these are not just clichés, but also the only roles – the eccentric, the useless, the victimised – that we seem to allow the elderly. Particularly elderly women, like Olga, who Rundis accuses of never having done anything with her life, never having walked on the moon. So when marginalised youth meets obsolete age, do we really expect or accept red cherries? This is not one of the roles we allow the elderly; not one of the interactions we permit being acted out between young and old. Despite the commonplaces at the basis of

Olga's character, it is Rundis, performed with a much more eclectic (and violent) range of mannerisms, which comes across as the shallower performance. McCallum seems to embody Olga much more deeply than Hickey does Rundis, living in her skin and performing with every wrinkle. But then these are not just Olga's wrinkles and aged hands that we see, but also McCallum's. In the intimate space of the Traverse Theatre's smallest auditorium, acute awareness of age in this production means that it becomes impossible to separate the character from the consummate performance of the actor.

The giving of such a symbolically charged gift of cherries is the pivot of the play: everything we are shown beforehand should bring us to acceptance of this scene and of this relationship. Rundis' gesture is right, and Olga's reply, giving an unemployable petty thief her dead husband's enormous leather wallet, is equally, comically appropriate. The moment wavers between the touching and the erotic, but never includes the ridiculous or laughable. At this instance it is up to you, if you want, to imagine the possibility of anything further, or of anything lasting, existing between this odd couple. But after this instance the decision is made for us, for the exchange of gifts is clearly the peak of the relationship. Olga suddenly ages, the outside world intervenes, and the moment is gone. Between an 18 and 85-year-old is a lot of time; it could only last if only time could stand still.

Fermentation

Grid Iron

The slow feeding of the audience around the many corridors and caverns of the Underbelly for *Fermentation*, Grid Iron's latest promenade production, means that one becomes very aware of one's neighbours, and of one's own clumsy feet and aching back. The production begins with the front-of-house crew herding the audience into a long corridor-like room just inside the entrance. Along one side is a counter, the remains of a bar or shop or bureaucratic waiting room, it isn't clear. Down the middle of the room and hanging from supporting columns are reddish gut-like tendrils of rotting fabric, the stinking rubbish that forms the backdrop of the production: one hot Parisian summer during an interminable garbage strike. In places planks are bolted across the ceiling, and plasterboard is screwed to the walls with plastic sealant seeping round the edges. It is unclear as to what is set and what is just the dilapidated state of the building. A series of smells follow us around, the whole place stinks of dust and later sweat and sulphurous steaming water; the smell of cheese may have been in my imagination. We are also followed by sounds, noises and music, much played from amongst the audience by Guy Nicholson, performing percussion with iron bars, clay pots, evian bottles, drums and bells.

Herded into a queue, arranged somewhat by height, we are suddenly joined by Odissa (Cait Davis). Here and throughout, hers is the most incredibly bodily of performances. Odissa walks in, lightly dressed with pale skin amongst the dark coated, muffled and anonymous audience, and looks at you with an expression that mixes hunger and sex and mischief. She has muscled arms, which rise up to her neck along broad shoulders and a strong back and is so grounded and so indisputably

The Underbelly, Edinburgh

13 February 2002

present. She has a distinctive face, impish, framed by short jet- black hair. Several times, as we move from room to room, Odissa is there before us, waiting as the audience shuffle in and greeting us with her chin slightly raised and mouth welcomingly open.

We follow Odissa, her part time lover Serge (Charlie Folorunsho) and rival Justine (Itxaso Moreno), around the belly of Edinburgh's Central Library and through the fetid summer of Paris's streets. Sex and love are followed by jealousy and desertion, and accompanied by pregnancy and realisation of independence. Odissa's belly grows, she ferments her child inside her, and becomes addicted to cheese. With her we receive lessons in cheese making, in the mould and growth and fermentation and unadulterated pleasure of cheese. As the play progresses the pregnant Odissa does not loose any of her physical lust or intensely bodily presence, but gains further layers. She eats cheese with greedy ferociousness; as a slither of Roquefort touches the tip of her tongue the room is filled with a fizzing ripping sulphurousness as Nicholson lights a handful of red-head matches on the floorboards at our feet. And the fermentation of her child inside her seethes and boils dreams from Odissa mind of Freudian intensity, acting out the sweat and heat of the city and of her swollen body. Now adorned by a lumbering pregnancy belly, Odissa spreads her fingers of her hands out wide, roles with a gait-legged walk, and has to bend over backwards to pick her cheese basket off the floor. In a steam stinking vaulted and belly shaped chamber, Odissa opens a fridge door, marking the moment her waters finally break – and the water pours out and runs between the feet of the watching audience.

Scratching the Inner Fields **Ultima Vez**

A series of duets between the seven female dancers in this striking performance stick in my mind. In a gesture made first by one dancer, then by another, the performer dominating the duet at any one moment passes their hand around the back their partner's neck, palm running close around the skin and under the hair until it has circled maybe three quarters of the way around. This attitude is briefly held: an intimate moment between the performers. Then suddenly, like the string of a spinning top, the hand is pulled away whipping the neck and head and entire body viciously round. A gesture of closeness and confidence is immediately transformed into one of violence.

This mix of sensuality, unremitting physical intensity, and a violence that is both physical and mental is characteristic of Wim Vandekeybus's choreography, performed by the Belgian company Ultima Vez. In one sequence Scottish dancer Iona Kewney seems to dissolve her bones as she bends and tosses herself around the stage, suddenly flipping herself crablike off the floor and turning on her head before she lands again, arms and legs folded underneath each other. Throughout the performance clothes are put on and taken off, long and short dresses, high heels, hats and scarves, many of them in silvers and golds, embroidered or patterned. These are glamorous outfits that are also transformed by the actions performed in them, as if the idea of women being restricting their bodies by the clothing they are forced into is being physically rejected.

This is a dance that seers itself onto the mind, memorably in particular gestures, themselves details of an overall force and visceral emotion. Also reminding us of the bone-bendingly physical dance we have seen is the debris that remains on the stage as the

Tramway, Glasgow **16 February 2002**

audience applaud. At the back of the theatre stand a row of six head high boards, behind which the dancers duck and weave and hide. By the end of the performance, the boards are covered in giant sheets of paper: some burnt, others ripped and torn, on each is a childish or dreamlike picture created by earth and water. In front of these boards soil coats the floor, spreading out from three small mounds at the front of the stage. This too tells a story of the performance: following the series of interchanging duets, three dancers rest their faces on the ground, panting and exhausted. Three other performers appear, carrying hessian sacks strapped in slings on their bellies like grotesque pregnancy bumps. Squatting as if to defecate or give birth (or both?) they pull a rip-cord and soil pours out over the heads of the prone dancers. As the dance continues, this soil scatters out, distributed by the hands, feet, heads, bellies and arms of the performers.

As we applaud, the scattered earth remains to remind me of all this, and adding to the mess and memory are dozens of sticks that fell from the ceiling and landed with a shattering clatter. The sticks are all oddly alike, long and fairly slender with only small kinks or bends in them before they reach a sharp elbow near one end. A piece of twine is knotted to each stick in a loop. Like the soil the sticks have been propelled around the stage, and have now been kicked out into a circle, thrown and pushed out of the way during a sequence when one performer wreathed across the stage with blood seeping from an embroidered hat she had just put on. With the sticks circling this scene the actual trace of the dancer's progress is also still visible, a sidewinder trail of blood and sweat pushing its way through the debris. It is appropriate that even after the applause dies down the sweat of these incredibly committed dancers remains.

Madame Butterfly Northern Ballet Theatre

This *Madame Butterfly* uses most of the emblems readily at hand to code aspects of the performance as 'Japanisme'. This begins with the stage design, which executes the familiar motifs of fans, kimonos, samurai swords, paper screen doors, magic lanterns, maple leaves, and cherry blossom. The idea of Japan becomes physical in these emblems, but sometimes it also seems that they don't just encode place but also difference, otherness, and danger. David Nixon's new version of *Madame Butterfly* for Northern Ballet Theatre does little to challenge the construction of the exotic Orient. Indeed, the concept behind the design and choreography is based upon seizing the stereotypes and utilising them as prominent motifs designed to signal the cultural differences to the audience as loudly as possible.

The plot presents the western audience with geishas, ceremonial kimonos, arranged marriages, and ritual suicide. These are all clichés of Oriental exoticism, which have grown into part of a western tradition of fantasy and invention: something particularly evident in Goro, the marriage broker, who with his greed and craftiness – black hair slicked down around his carefully sculptured bald crown – is a character straight from nineteenth-century tales of adventures with dastardly 'Chinamen'. The choreography similarly attempts to make the Orient present in the very movements of the performers. This was most visible in the intricate hand gestures, with wrists bent and fingers spread, which are readily associated with Japan. Such 'Japanisme' is inscribed deeply into the movement, particularly in the dances of the chorus, such as the wedding guests, and the character roles, such as the marriage broker and holy man. Here a jump is performed with legs rapidly making small kicking gestures mid-leap; characters crouch down, with knees and elbows held at right angles; sudden leaps,

Edinburgh Festival Theatre 27 February 2002

cricket-like, are made high into the air. Performed largely to Puccini's orchestral score, Nixon has added to the music at the beginning and end of the performance, with sharp chords, discordance, bells and plucked strings, all being markers of the eastern, foreign, and other.

The encoding of 'Japan' so deeply into music, visual design, and movement is so successfully achieved that it should surely start to become worrying. The production does attempt to match such encoding of the 'east' with a similarly strong mark of 'west', present in the smart starched white naval uniforms of the Pinkerton and his fellow officers. This is matched by their performance of dances filled with laddish, backslapping, high-stepping camaraderie and, repeatedly, a jaunty salute. And in Puccini's music there are lengthy quotations from 'The Star Spangled Banner' and distinct hints (I think but am not certain) of 'Here comes the Bride'. Such samplings of familiar tunes, along with smoothed out strings and rounded brass notes, are utilised as representative of western characters.

Whether the balance between east and west is evenly constructed is subtle, although there are no extremes of westernness to match the clichés presented of the east. Such eastern extremes are particularly present at the climax of the production, where Butterfly finds herself rejected by her western 'husband', her child snatched away from her, and turns back to her own culture. Dressed in a blood-red kimono, with movements now drawn completely from the traditions of kabuki and accompanied by taped music featuring a Japanese singer, Butterfly performs a dance of ritualised death. All the codes are now 'eastern', and much of it might now be seen as authentically so, although that this horrific enactment of suicide might today be accepted as authentically, naturally, and intrinsically Japanese is still part of our constructed vision of the east.

Waterwall **Materiali Resistenti Dance Factory**

The only way to speak about *Waterwall*, is to attempt to describe it. Italian choreographer Ivan Manzoni and the Materiali Resistenti Dance Factory have developed a production that does exactly what it says in the title. In the Tramway a self-contained set has been constructed. Three tiers of metal posts, gratings, and girders rise at the back of the space, the industrial looking quality of this set emphasised when the dancers first appear wearing luminous orange overalls, and hard-hats with headlamps sending beams of light onto shinning metal. Sweeping down from this construction, and forming an apron between the audience arranged on its three sides, is a sheet of smooth, deep black latex.

As the performance starts the dancers cover the front row of the audience with clear, unsexy plastic sheeting, before deliberately spraying the second and third rows with a light sprinkling of water. From then on in the set does its thing as a wall of water pours thunderously from the second tier of the scaffolding, dropping through plastic gratings on the lower level, and splashing down the latex apron. The volume of water is thunderous and physical, an incessant noise that forms a monotone backbeat to the entire performance. The water is an absolute presence in the production: it pours indomitable and never ending, hypnotically capturing our eyes and our ears, and our noses as the heat of the water releases a pungent, fertile scent. Accompanying the roar of the water is an almost continual electronic score, sometimes echoing the industrial theme of the performance's opening, sometimes failing to compete with the noise of the water.

The dancers, eight women and two men, now dressed in skin hugging black wetsuits, perform in and around this perfect sheet of water. They construct shapes in it with their bodies: first subtly, spray cascading off an

Tramway, Glasgow **28 February 2002**

elbow or leg inserted into the wall of water. The lighting changes as they do so, radically re-defining the dimensions of the water each time: sometime it looks solid, at others more transparent. Dancers duck and dive through the water, hang upside down in it, climb up scaffolding in it, or spin on trapezes performing summersaults as they appear and disappear through the incessant wall of water. The water and the dancers come to define each other: the dancer's bodies making shapes in the water; but the water pounding over their bodies also dictating their appearance. As a line of four dancers yet again step through the wall of water their faces and mouths and limbs are all set in the indescribable manner that such quantities of water dictates: mouth pursed, perhaps spitting out as they breath, limbs hanging unresisting, becoming part of the incessant flow of water.

This is all entirely abstract. The suggestion of something industrial is soon forgotten, as is any fretting for significance, as sensuality and playfulness entirely take over. As water is spilt across the black apron, forming a thin sheen of liquid, the dancers throw themselves down the slope, joyfully skimming on the film of water in twos and threes right to the feet of the audience. Water, black latex, dancers in figure hugging outfits, the shinning skin of strong arms and legs all meet when, at one point, all eight female dancers kneel near the front of the stage, water dripping from their torsos, and toss their long wet hair, water again splashing the audience. At another moment, however, four dancers suddenly appear through the middle of the wall of water, hanging from harnesses around their waists and propelling themselves violently forwards and upwards: now all is strength, power, co-ordination, a sensuality far beyond the merely titillating. At the end the water gurgles away, and our ears eventually pop.

A Streetcar Named Desire
Royal Lyceum Theatre Company

The set for the Royal Lyceum Company's production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, directed by Muriel Romanes, attempts to stage both the insides and outsides of a building at the same time. Stairs run up the outside, a drainpipe runs down, with the beginnings of a cast iron balcony running round the first storey apartment also visible. With these elements, along with the edges of stonework and walls, the structure of a house is hinted at before fading into nothingness to reveal a crammed and detailed interior. Visible through this skeleton house the silhouette of musicians appear as they perform jazz sessions between the scenes: most of the performance also being accompanied by jazz trumpet, piano, and clarinet.

In this manner the set economically details the time and place, also reminding us of New Orleans's decaying and slightly decadent reputation. And with the Elysian Fields house represented like a cut away picture, the audience is invited to look inside and see the people, with intimate observation the real fascination of this production. With the set cramming the Lyceum's already small stage, intimacy is literally forced upon Blanche, Stanley, and Stella, forever getting in each other's faces as they circle around the tables, chairs, and beds. This is theatre as performing doll's house.

The importance of intimacy and details continues through all levels of the production. Each scene is forcibly acted out with the characters crowded against each other,

Royal Lyceum Theatre
3 March 2002

Blanche and Stanley brushing up in doorways, Stella attempting the negotiate more lightly around the issues. A detailed emphasis on clothing is also apparent: Blanche's trunk of fake furs and rhinestone tiaras another obstacle to manoeuvre around. Stanley changes outfits almost as often as Blanche: from sweaty white singlets, to shimmering bowling tops. Both Jennifer Black's Blanche and Paul Hamilton's Stanley seek to fill the tiny space: Blanche's gestures are large and expansive, arms flung wide and pastiche glamour-poses struck; Stanley, short and muscled, blunders around, moving quickly and familiarly around his territory. Cora Bissett's Stella is more compact, little pure-white pop-socks up to her ankles, a voice that is nowhere near as loud as her sister's. Even when heavily pregnant she attempts to shrink into corners and hide at the edges.

The meeting of bodies and clashing of minds, of opposites and underlying similarities, these themes are played out in a cross between overacted melodrama and detailed micro-drama, and concretely realised in the crowding of the one-room apartment. For the actors these roles always represent a challenge, the southern drawl a particular test for a few of the performers. And for the audience the production, particularly crowded into such a intimate doll's house, provides a shiver of voyeuristic intrigue at seeing such exotic and vibrant creatures destroy themselves with such gay abandon.

Macbeth **Ro Theatre, Rotterdam**

The opening of this *Macbeth*, performed by Holland's Ro Theatre and directed by Alize Zandwijk, throws the audience slightly off kilter and largely rejects expectations of furious battle and spooky witches. A small child, face obscured by a cardboard, visored helmet, shadow fights with a paper sword. His grunts and yelps of battle are high-pitched and off-key but the audience does not laugh. Then the weird sisters appear and walk ever-so-slowly to the front of the stage. Their hands, wrists, feet, and ankles are blackened with ink. They sit, and gaze blankly out into the auditorium. Then, eventually, with deadpan and deliberately anti-dramatic expression they speak, setting the underlying tone for this pared down, stark, Dutch language version of *Macbeth*.

When *Macbeth* and Banquo meet the sisters, delivery is again restrained, almost casual. *Macbeth* pokes his bent, rusty sword rather diffidently into his shoe, leaning awkwardly to one side. He is a soldier, not quite comfortable in the world. The witches paint *Macbeth*'s forehead with a lopsided crown and it is their prediction that gives him a role in life, lighting his eyes with radiant purpose and ambition. The elder witch leaves with a broomstick stuck pathetically between her legs; *Macbeth* gazes up at the flies and asks where they've gone. This is a weird meeting, between fighting men and the fortune-telling sisters, and the production is not afraid to allow some odd comedy to emerge.

On meeting with the king and the other nobles, the men exchange a long series of ostentatious backslapping hugs, punching each other in pseudo-friendship, displaying their manly camaraderie. At the feast in the castle this is repeated: Duncan giggling inanely as he and *Macbeth* engage in tickling fights; Lady *Macbeth* spraying water over her guests while laughing, cackling, hysterically. The scene is nervously funny, portraying false and two-faced hospitality – they already plan to kill the king – which becomes the real crime, instead of the rather abstract notion of regicide.

As each character learns of Duncan's death they are unable to speak of the

Royal Lyceum Theatre **20 August 2002**

unspeakable and cover their mouths with horror. Then descends a multi-layered mechanical ballet, the performers enacting the overthrow of nature. With order usurped the slow paced and restrained production suddenly enters another level of untrammelled emotion and sense-warping pain. *Macbeth* screams out his lines, speeches tumbling-out, overlapped, no longer translated in supertitles as meaning is replaced by chaos. Lady *Macbeth* (Jocqueline Blom, with big hair and a nose that appears to hook down towards pursed lips) repeatedly faints and is continually picked up only for her legs to give way again. The witches, on their jet-black tiptoes, perform a shuffling, peculiarly glee-less celebratory dance. And although the production returns to a restrained and slow delivery, once revealed it is clear that this speechless mayhem always rumbles just under the surface. Afterwards, in this decent into mental anarchy, each murder is carried out more enthusiastically than the last, Steven Van Watermuelen's *Macbeth* progressively becoming less clear eyed and his motivations self-perpetuating. Eventually he blacks his face up entirely, only white eyes and teeth gleaming out at the world. This symbolism works – black blood, black heart – but must also provoke awkward questions about its appropriateness.

There is something unnerving about the use of humour in this *Macbeth*; especially so in a production that presents the deaths, the many deaths, with simple effectiveness: *Macbeth* runs his finger round the necks of *Macduff*'s child and wife, leaving a trail of black paint lines – the mother still screaming long after he cuts her throat. The humour underscores, with telling emotional reversal, the unnaturalness and horror of the events. It makes grotesque (rather than picturesque) all the elements of the supernatural and melodrama; it makes *Macbeth*'s ambition perverse rather than admirable. Humour dramatically undercuts his always false heroism: the only response *Macbeth* can muster to learning that *Macduff* is not of women born is a visibly deflated 'oh'. Knowing that he is not invincible, all *Macbeth*'s puff, passion, and bluff leaves his merely human body.

James Crabb and Geir Draugsvoll

Looked at face on, James Crabb and Geir Draugsvoll appear half-hidden by their instruments. Sitting centre stage of the Usher Hall they resemble a Magritte painting, their torsos replaced by the bellows of their accordions. This image is appropriate, for the sound produced seems to go direct from the lungs of these machines to the lungs of the audience, sudden chords and sustained vibrations reverberating around the venue.

Even beyond this fanciful imagery, the playing of these instruments is theatrical, a complicated mechanical choreography of bellows, stoppers, and keys. At one moment Crabb makes a drum of his instrument, pounding the bellows with his open palms, a deep and hollow sound that Draugsvoll accompanies with the accordion's natural, multi-textured reverberations. The drama of the playing is continually emphasised by the presence of two instruments, sometimes mirroring and sometimes contradicting each other in movement and sound, and, with the duo sitting close together, the structure of their arrangements is visible: one instrument often providing substance to which the other provides articulation of the details. It sometimes feels as if the two instruments produce two levels of sound: a background drone accompanied by the expression of actual and distinct notes. However, throughout

Usher Hall, Edinburgh 23 August 2002

the arrangement of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* the lower-toned articulation is always equally expressive, with great variety in texture and surface. This musical texture is provided physical substance in the manner in which the sound is produced, languid extensions of the bellows to full arms width breath out a reverberating rumble, while quicker motions – the bellows rocking from top to bottom rather than outwards – expel a sharper, more individually detailed texture. When the instruments play in unison such expression of details is joined by sheer volume: something particularly noticeable in the arrangement of Mussorgsky's *Pictures at the Exhibition*, where each rendition of the promenade, each at a different tempo and key, produces layer upon layer of physical and multi-textured sound.

The late-night performance ends with an encore performance of Piazzola's tango *Obsession*. Here, suddenly, the entire attitude and posture of the performers changes, they sit somehow differently on their chairs, rock and broaden their shoulders as the bellows are drawn slowly out to their full extension. Again, the quality of the sound is manifest in the movements of the performers, as the instruments now produce a very different sound, softer, somehow warmer and more languid, reflecting the pace and sensual movements of the tango.

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